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POLL RESULTS

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1	60
2	24
3	28
4	23
5	22

Sunday, December 27, 2009

INSIDE

Tight Security

Airports worldwide tightened security a day after a passenger tried to light some kind of explosive on a flight into Detroit.

BUSINESS...Page 13

Ferry Sinks

A passenger ferry sank in the northern Philippines in a second sea disaster in three days.

ASIA...Page 15

Sheen Arrested

Charlie Sheen is arrested on domestic violence allegations.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 19

No CNMI teachers' rep on education board. **PAGE 3**

Sources: King to run for the post of Regents chair. **PAGE 6**

'No election complaints warrant referral to OAG'

Today is deadline for filing campaign finance reports

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Public Auditor has said it received only a handful of election-related complaints during the Nov. 7 general elections and the Nov. 23 gubernatorial runoff elections, and none of the complaints warranted referral to the Office of the Attorney General for criminal prosecution.

Candidates who ran during the Nov. 7 general elections are also reminded that today is the deadline for filing campaign statements of account.

The deadline for filing for the CNMI's first gubernatorial runoff election is on Jan. 12, 2010.

See COMPLAINTS on Page 4

5,000 signatures for 'green cards' now easy target

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Worker groups have already gathered at least 4,600 written and electronic signatures as of yesterday to petition the U.S. government to grant "green card" or lawful permanent residence status to long-time nonresident workers and other relatives of U.S. citi-

See SIGNATURES on Page 4

I feel confident that the U.S. Congress will eventually grant status to the nonresidents who have been in the CNMI five or more years.

—Wendy Doromal

JAPANESE FESTIVAL HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Members of the Japanese Society of CNMI and PDM Promoters Inc. perform traditional Japanese dances and music during the Japanese Mochitsuki Fiesta at the Paseo de Marianas on Saturday. Event highlights included the traditional "mochi" or rice cake pounding ceremony, plus food, fun, games and merchandise.

Obama's Hawaii holiday may boost tourism

By MARK NIESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

KAILUA, Hawaii (AP)—Tourism officials don't expect President Barack Obama's visit to attract tourists immediately to Hawaii, but they hope it will provide free advertising for a financially struggling state that relies on travelers to keep its economy afloat.

"Hawaii reaps the benefit of the

See OBAMA on Page 4

Labor: 50 percent of small biz now comply with hiring policy

A Department of Labor report to lawmakers a day before Christmas stated that about 50 percent of small businesses in the CNMI have hired at least one U.S. citizen to comply with a requirement that started on Oct. 1.

Deputy Secretary of Labor Cinta M. Kaipat said the department's Division of Employment Services is working with the remaining businesses to ensure they are in compliance with the U.S. citizen hiring requirement as quickly as possible.

See story on Page 5

Local

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PACIFIC HOME HEALTH CARE

Woman sues allegedly drunk motorist

A woman who was reportedly injured when her car collided with another vehicle in Koblerville is now suing the driver of the other car, claiming he was intoxicated when the incident happened.

Maria D. Aguon sued Sandy B. Quemado for reckless driving, careless and negligent driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol.

Aguon's lawyer, Victorino DLG. Torres, asked the Superior Court to order Quemado to pay her damages, attorney's fees, and court costs.

Torres stated in the complaint that around 1am on Aug. 30, 2009, Quemado was driving his car along Koblerville's main road south from Tottotville Housing toward Hannam Market.

While driving, the lawyer, said, Quemado drove out of his lane and proceeded to the outer lane, facing the oncoming traffic where Aguon was driving.

"[Aguon] was in complete shock and nervousness and immediately turned left to avoid the collision but defendant drove back toward plaintiff's direction causing direct impact to plaintiff's vehicle," Torres said.

Torres said that Quemado had consumed alcoholic beverages prior to driving that day.

"Plaintiff suffered intense and excruciating pain, serious physical injuries, and had to be admitted to a hospital and to the attention, care and treatment of skilled physicians and nurses," the lawyer added.

The complaint did not mention the extent of damages to the vehicles. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

'VOICE OF DEMOCRACY' WINNERS

Marianas High School student Eileen Echaluse, left, who won first place in the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Voice of Democracy essay writing competition, poses with second place winner Panidta Torres at the VFW Post 3457 headquarters on Beach Road on Dec. 23 after being presented with their certificates and check prizes. Echaluse was awarded $100 for winning at the post level and $150 for winning at the district level, for a total cash prize of $250. Torres won $100.

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No CNMI teachers' rep on education board

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The CNMI Board of Education now has two vacancies following the term expiration of Scott Norman, who served as teachers' representative from private schools.

The eight-member board is also short of a teacher representative from public schools after the departure of Ambrose Bennett in January 2008.

Both positions need appointment from the governor.

As of Thursday last week, the Governor's Office stated that no new appointments have been made for both positions. Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has been off-island since the start of the holidays.

During last week's meeting, Board of Education chair Lucy Blanco-Maratita disclosed that Norman's term expired in October and that they are waiting for a new appointment or reappointment from the island's chief executive officer.

The board plans to award a plaque of appreciation to Norman for his years of service to the board.

The delay in the governor's appointment of a CNMI teacher representative to the BOE is a result of an unmet constitutional requirement.

The administration earlier pointed out that PSS has not met the requirements of the CNMI Constitution, which mandates the certification of a possible candidate by a collective bargaining agent of public school teachers.

Blanco-Maratita

It has been almost two years since the board has had a teacher representative.

Although the Association of Commonwealth Teachers amended its bylaws and recommended its president for the position, Fitial has made no appointment to date.

The BOE, meantime, had emphasized in the past that it has no authority to get involved in the selection of a candidate for the position.

Public school teachers had stressed the important role played by the teacher representative, who serves as the information link between the board and the islands' educators.

In 2008, Bennett asked for the Superior Court's opinion on the constitutional amendment requiring an exclusive bargaining representative of teachers, after ACT chose Betty Miller as its president and nominated her appointment to the BOE.

The court was also asked to determine the role of the governor in the selection process for the teacher representative as well as the proper body or agency that must conduct the election for the post.

The court declined Bennett's request.

The Association of Commonwealth Teachers has already elected Angela Wheat as its new president but she has yet to be appointed to the Board of Education post.

The five voting members on the board include Maratita, vice chair Herman T. Guerrero, Marylou Ada, Tanya King, and Galvin Deleon Guerrero. Also onboard is non-voting students representative Francine Babauta.

5 charges vs man who allegedly made shooting rampage threats

A man who allegedly assaulted a woman inside a store in Garapan and threatened to stage a shooting rampage similar to the Marpi incident that happened on Nov. 20 is now facing five charges in a local court.

The Office of the Attorney General filed an information charging the 45-year-old Guo Hui Pan with assault, assault and battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, disturbing the peace, and contempt.

The OAG alleged that on Dec. 8, 2009, Pan attacked a woman inside a store in Garapan and assaulted her with a knife. Two days later, the prosecution said, Pan disobeyed a court order to stay away from the victim.

Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo initially imposed a $50,000 cash bail for Pan's temporary liberty. Associate Judge Perry Inos modified the bail and imposed a $2,500 cash bail plus $22,500 unsecured bond.

Inos also granted Pan's request to be released to a third-party custodian.

Police arrested Pan on Dec. 10.

Detective Jackson W. Jack stated in his report that the attack happened inside the 99 Cents Supermarket.

Jack said that while the victim was walking near one of the food aisles in the store, Pan, who was intoxicated, approached her.

Pan allegedly took out a knife, pointed it at the victim, and threatened to kill her, accusing her of causing his termination from work. Pan allegedly punched the victim in the chest.

The store's night supervisor noticed the commotion and directed the suspect to put away the knife and leave the store.

As Pan was leaving, he allegedly threatened the victim if she wants to die "just like those people that got shot" during the recent shooting rampage.

The victim was treated at the Commonwealth Health Center and later released. The right side of her face was swollen, and she had bruises on the right shoulder, left arm, and other parts of the body.

On Nov. 20 this year, Li Zhong Ren, a Chinese national, went on a shooting rampage, killing four persons in Kannat Tabla and injuring one child. He proceeded to Marpi where he shot and injured seven tourists before killing himself.

DPS recently stated that police investigators have received some complaints of people making threats to copy the shooting rampage. DPS said investigators take such complaints seriously. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Retirees oppose re-computation of benefits

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Retirement Association is opposing the proposed re-computation of retirement benefits of members, saying the measure would further hurt the fiscal state of the NMI Retirement Fund.

Juan Sablan, the association's chairman, asked Gov. Benigno R. Fitial to consider the retirees' plight in the Legislature's wish to implement the idea.

Retirees wrote Fitial on Monday to express opposition to the measure that now sits on his desk for approval.

House Bill 16-68, which was passed by both legislative chambers, proposes to allow retirees who opted out of government health insurance coverage to enroll in that plan by paying in full the cost.

A separate provision proposes to amend Section 8392 of Public Law 15-70 to allow retirees who are re-employed by the government to have their retirement benefits re-computed based on re-employment services.

The Fund earlier noted that the re-computation would be an added benefit for members without the necessary independent source of funding.

Lawmakers who favor the legislation had argued that retirees are entitled to re-computation if they are re-employed by the government.

According to CRA president Sablan, the idea of re-computing the retirement benefits of members will further harm the solvency of the Fund.

In a letter, the association wants an audience with the governor to further discuss the impact of the legislation on the entire performance of the Fund.

"We strongly disagree with the provision of re-computing the benefits because it will further hurt the situation of the Fund," Sablan told *Saipan Tribune.*

"We're optimistic that the governor will hear our concerns…and would veto the bill on his table," he added.

As of yesterday, the association had yet to obtain a response from the Governor's Office.

During last week's board meeting of the NMI Retirement Fund trustees, Sablan described the proposal as "unfair."

He asked the trustees for their position on the legislation. Fund administrator Mark Aguon said the board's position on the bill is currently being drafted.

'More concerns'

At the same meeting, Sablan followed up on the status of the agency's Web site, which has been "in construction" for quite a long time.

"We have concerns about the Web site…because that's the only way for many of our members in the U.S. to get updated information about the Retirement Fund. I hope the trustees could expedite its construction," he told the trustees.

Saipan Tribune learned that the association also sent the board two other letters, inquiring about the status of the over $231 million court judgment and the latest statistics about the Fund's members.

Board chair Sixto Igisomar assured Sablan that the board will provide a response to all the inquiries sent by the association.

OBAMA

From Page 1

spotlight he provides," said Darlene Morikawa, a spokeswoman for the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, which has a Web page dedicated to Obama's past visits. "The last time he was here in Hawaii, national news shows were going live every morning. We had our sunny coverage in the middle of CNN's snow coverage."

The snack shops, landmarks and beaches Obama previously visited continue to get a steady stream of visitors a year after his last visit to the island.

People remember the campaign photos of Obama sharing shave ice—a monster version of the snow cone—with his daughters at Island Snow Shave Ice in Kailua, near the family's vacation house.

"It's amazing how many people come in and ask about it," said Kainoa Kaehu, an employee at the shave ice store. "There's going to be a lot more people coming. People are saying, 'Maybe we'll see him this time.'"

A family of six from Spokane, Washington state, visited Island Snow this week after they heard it was where Obama had eaten.

"If it's good enough for Obama, it's good enough for us, and I'm a Republican," said family patriarch Steve Salvatori as he sipped a root beer shave ice. "Most people on the mainland wouldn't know where Kailua is until you say, 'It's where Obama vacations.'"

Tourists frequently ask to see Kapiolani Medical Center where Obama was born, Punahou Circle apartments where he lived for much of his childhood and Punahou School where he graduated high school, said David Uchiyama, vice president of marketing for the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

AP

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama look at a child as they greet marines during Christmas dinner at Anderson Hall on Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kailua, Hawaii Friday, Dec. 25, 2009. The Obamas are in Hawaii for the holidays.

But most efforts to capitalize on Obama's fame haven't proven successful, said Rob Kay, who highlights significant places from Obama's childhood on his Web site "Obama's Neighborhood."

"The nascent Obama tourism industry never really took off. There was some interest for a while, but for whatever reason it seemed to dissipate," Kay said. "It's hard to anticipate that his visit will bring any kind of boom, but it can't hurt."

People wishing to follow Obama's activities while he's in the islands can do so on the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau Web site, which has set up a page labeled "Barack Obama's Hawaii." Other businesses have incorporated Obama into their Pearl Harbor and Polynesian tours.

"People want to vacation where the president vacations," said Anissa Gunther, operations manager for Kailua Sailboards & Kayaks, located in the same shopping center as Island Snow Shave Ice. "It's cool to see him come back."

This is Obama's first visit back to Hawaii since he was sworn in as president.

He was previously in the islands for Christmas vacation last year and during a family vacation in August before he accepted the Democratic presidential nomination. He also returned to Honolulu last October to visit his ailing grandmother, Madelyn Payne Dunham, who died just two nights before Election Day.

"People are sitting back home and saying, 'Wow, look how beautiful it is. Let's go to Hawaii,'" said hiking guide Mitch Berger. "It's very slow this holiday season. Anything that gets us in the news doesn't hurt."

The number of visitors to Hawaii declined to about 5.4 million through the first 10 months of this year, a 5.5 percent decrease from the previous year, according to statistics from the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

COMPLAINTS

From Page 1

"As in prior elections, the complaints were about campaign activities allegedly on government time and/or on government premises... None of the complaints received warranted referral to the AGO. OPA has the capability to investigate election related complaints," Public Auditor Michael Pai told *Saipan Tribune* in an e-mail.

The public auditor said the complaints were received either via the telephone or via the e-mail complaint system on the OPA Web site.

OPA, however, did not want to disclose the exact number of complaints received, and the number of complaints being investigated.

Some members of the community have been talking about alleged vote-buying but no one has stepped forward to give credence to these reports.

Both the general and runoff elections were generally peaceful, according to the Department of Public Safety.

In the CNMI, the most common complaints during election seasons involve alleged use of government vehicles, government office supplies or government work hours for political campaigning.

But the decline in election-related complaints has been credited to peoples' awareness about the CNMI Government Ethics Act or the do's and don't's related to political activities. OPA has also been conducting presentations about the CNMI Government Ethics Act to help deter abuse of authority and misuse of government resources, especially during election season.

On its Web site, OPA has listed the kinds of political activities that are prohibited, including government officials and employees' use public funds, time, personnel, or equipment for political activity unless that use is authorized by law or is incidental to a legally authorized or required activity. For example, they shall not at any time circulate any petition, including a nominating petition, in a government office,

Campaign reports

All candidates and political parties are required by law to file their campaign statements of account within 50 days after the election, or by Dec. 28, 2009, for the 2009 general elections on Nov. 7, and Jan. 12, 2010, for the CNMI's first gubernatorial runoff election on Nov. 23.

Candidates can ask for an extension to file their campaign statement of account by providing a written request with the Commonwealth Election Commission, which may extend the deadline for filing by up to 15 days.

However, the candidate must possess an approved extension by today to avoid being assessed a penalty.

A candidate or political party will be assessed a penalty of $100 for each calendar day the report is late.

A person who violates the requirements for filing shall, upon conviction, be fined up to $50,000 or imprisoned for up to one year, or both.

As of Dec. 11, only eight of the 110 certified candidates in the general polls filed their campaign statement of account with OPA. Board of Education vice chair Herman T. Guerrero was the first one to file his campaign statement of account on Nov. 12.

The campaign statement of account must show details of any contribution worth at least $500 received during the election period. It is required to include all campaign contributions and expenses, including proceeds and expenses from fundraising events, in-kind contributions, contributed property, and multi-candidate contributions and expenses. Forms can be downloaded from the OPA Web site, www.opacnmi.com.

SIGNATURES

From Page 1

zens in the CNMI, and the number is expected to far exceed the 5,000 signatures targeted by January 2010.

Florida-based human rights activist and former Rota teacher Wendy Doromal, who started the online petition on Nov. 14, said the number of signatures gathered so far exceeds their expectations.

"I feel confident that the U.S. Congress will eventually grant status to the nonresidents who have been in the CNMI five or more years. Nonresidents can also send letters detailing their circumstances and desire for status and we will hand carry them with the petitions," Doromal told *Saipan Tribune.*

Ronnie Doca, board chairman of the United Workers Movement-NMI, expressed confidence yesterday that the groups will easily exceed the 5,000 signatures they originally set to gather.

"I'm very confident we will have more than 5,000. But the more signatures we gather, the better," he said.

Yesterday alone, the United Workers Movement-NMI and Pilcowa gathered additional 100 signatures, Doca said.

The United Workers Movement-NMI, Pilcowa, the Coalition of United Workers-NMI and Doromal have been collaborating on the signature drive for improved immigration status among nonresidents ahead of the May 10, 2010 deadline for Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to recommend to Congress whether a grant of permanent immigration status to nonresidents in the CNMI is necessary

The federalization law or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 requires the Interior secretary, in consultation with the Homeland Security secretary and the governor of the CNMI, to recommend to the U.S. Congress, as the secretary deems appropriate, a permanent immigration status to guest workers legally residing in the CNMI, by May 10, 2010.

The federal government took over CNMI immigration on Nov. 28 pursuant to the CNRA or Public Law 110-229.

Also included in the Interior's report are the numbers of aliens residing in the CNMI, a description of their legal status under federal law, the number of years each alien has been residing in the CNMI, and the current and future requirements of the local economy for an alien workforce.

The petition is addressed to President Obama, members of the U.S. Congress, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial earlier said he will not block the granting of "green cards" if and when the federal government decides to grant them.

As of yesterday afternoon, the online signature drive has so far gathered 2,063 signatures. Written signatures from Saipan have exceeded 2,300, while those from Rota, over 300.

"I expect to easily reach and even surpass the goal of 5,000. The number of signatures we have gathered so far exceeds my expectations. I am also very pleased that so many CNMI residents are signing to support the guest workers. Several worker groups are scanning the signature pages and emailing them to me," Doromal said.

The groups extended the petition date to the end of January, from the original target date of early next month.

"After the holidays, some immigration groups are putting out notice to members so we should get even more support," Doromal added.

Besides the signature drive, the worker groups have also been assisting nonresidents and other community members in submitting comments to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on its CNMI-only transitional worker program rules.

Doca said they gathered some 25 comments in yesterday's work session, from 9am to 5pm at the Fiesta Filipino by Juvy Restaurant in Susupe.

The United Workers Movement-NMI and Pilcowa are also hosting their holiday party at the Fiesta Filipino by Juvy Restaurant at 6pm today. Contact Rabby Syed at 285-3306, Ronnie Doca 285-9255 , or Jun Concillado 287-0191 for more information.

Labor: 50 percent of small biz now comply with hiring policy

Kaipat reports to lawmakers on umbrella permits, coordination with federal agencies

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A Department of Labor report to lawmakers a day before Christmas stated that about 50 percent of small businesses in the CNMI have hired at least one U.S. citizen to comply with a requirement that started on Oct. 1.

Deputy Secretary of Labor Cinta M. Kaipat said the department's Division of Employment Services is working with the remaining businesses to ensure they are in compliance with the U.S. citizen hiring requirement as quickly as possible.

These are part of Kaipat's latest interim progress report to the 16th Legislature on the implementation of Public Law 15-108, or the new labor reform law that she authored when she was a member of the House of Representatives.

The report, dated Dec. 24, said the enforcement of the U.S. citizen hiring requirement "has been progressing steadily since the Oct. 1 start date."

Kaipat

Umbrella permits

Kaipat said the interim report keeps lawmakers posted on the progress that Labor has been making. Among them is the issuance of umbrella permits to some 96 percent of eligible foreign workers.

Labor distributed the umbrella permits in a six-week period, from Oct. 16 to Nov. 27.

"The department's new automation system works very well in printing the necessary permits, and the staff worked very hard at the distribution process. Most employers and foreign workers are currently covered by the Commonwealth-approved contracts and Commonwealth-issued permits, so we expect relatively few federal permits will be issued for the next two years," said Kaipat.

The umbrella permits expire on Nov. 27, 2011.

Coordination with federal agencies

Kaipat said Labor senior staff met with officials of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on Dec. 2 to discuss coordination efforts.

"The department will shortly designate a senior staffer as the principal point of contact to make lines of communication more efficient. We believe there will be good cooperation among all concerned," she said.

The Labor official also noted a federal judge's order on Nov. 25 preventing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from implementing its transitional worker program, to provide for public comment before the rules are issued.

DHS extended the public comment period for 30 days or until Jan. 8, 2010.

On Nov. 17, Labor submitted a 46-page detailed comment on the DHS rule. Among other things, Labor said its 2007 labor system "is fair and effective method for operating a successful guest worker program under the unique conditions in the Commonwealth and should be supported by the transitional federal system."

Federalization's fault

Kaipat said the backlog of cases in the Superior Court has grown.

"These cases provide a basis for out-of-status persons to remain in the Commonwealth and, apparently, because of the federal takeover of immigration enforcement, there has been an increase in filings," she told lawmakers.

The federal government took over CNMI immigration on Nov. 28.

She also said that Labor has nearly completed the work on unpaid wages claims that arose in 2008 and prior years. Labor changed its practices because of Superior Court associate judge Perry B. Inos' ruling pertaining to bond issue.

Labor published notices in the newspapers over a six-month period for those with claims to come to the department and register. The department then scheduled hearings with the bonding companies.

"All of the hearings have been completed, and all but few of the opinions have been issued. In cases in which the bonding companies were ordered to pay, many of them have appealed and the cases are now in the Superior Court," she added.

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Sources: King to run for the post of Regents chair

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Janet King will run for the position of chairperson of the Northern Marianas College Board of Regents in this week's scheduled meeting, well-placed sources told the *Saipan Tribune*.

King neither confirmed nor denied the report when contacted yesterday.

The regents are slated to meet on Wednesday; the election of officers is among the agenda.

Charles V. Cepeda is the former chairman of the board. His contract expired on Nov. 14. Regent Maria Malua Peter is now serving as board chair in an acting capacity.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial reappointed Cepeda to the post but his nomination has yet to be confirmed by the Senate.

King was appointed to the board in May 2008; her term will expire on Sept. 23, 2010.

King

King is also on the board of the NMI Council for the Humanities, a non-profit institution promoting history, culture, art, and literature.

She completed her bachelor's degree at Wellesley College. She pursued her law degree at University of Nebraska College of Law, graduating in 2006. She has passed the bar examinations in Hawaii, Guam, and the Northern Marianas. She returned to the Commonwealth after graduating from law school.

King has been one of the more vocal members of the NMC board, speaking out on matters relating to the college. Recently, she has expressed concern about the large number of college employees who have been let go.

The board is expected to take action this week on a petition by NMC students asking for an explanation for the non-renewal of veteran instructor Sam McPheters' contract.

"It is not our position to be a part of the administrative decisions of the president, but I think that by looking broadly at the faculty recruitment and retention and how that may negatively affect the college as an academic institution, the Board of Regents can certainly intervene," said King during last week's interview with *Saipan Tribune*.

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IN COURT BATTLE AMONG TINIAN POLITICIANS

Tinian Municipal Council chair defends Quichocho

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ramon K. Quichocho is the legal counsel of the 12th Tinian Municipal Council, not the Office of the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan, according to council chair Antonio H. Borja.

In a declaration filed in court, Borja said that at no time did he ever consider or regard Quichocho as counsel for the Office of the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan, or as counsel for the mayor or acting mayor.

"Not only do I know that attorney Quichocho does not have a legal services contract with the Office of the Mayor, attorney Quichocho has always made it clear to me who his client is, which is the Twelfth Tinian Municipal Council," the chairman said.

During a Dec. 18 hearing, Superior Court associate judge Ramona V. Manglona had disqualified Quichocho from representing Tinian mayor-elect Ramon M. Dela Cruz and co-plaintiffs in a lawsuit against outgoing Tinian Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas and others, citing conflict of interest.

Borja that, on Oct. 30, 2009, Quichocho had called to inform him that that Tinian Municipality's chief executive officer, William M. Cing, had contacted him about a legal opinion that Cing wants rendered about the ability of the Tinian & Aguiguan Municipality to loan $1 million from the Marianas Public Land Trust.

Quichocho reportedly told Borja that he had informed Cing that he must first get the instructions from Borja since the Municipal Council is his client.

"Mr. Cing also contacted me by phone and asked me whether attorney Quichocho can represent the Mayor's Office, and I told Mr. Cing that it is up to attorney Quichocho," he said.

After that phone conversation with Cing, Borja said he called Quichocho to tell him to go ahead and render a legal opinion on behalf of the Municipal Council whether the municipality can proceed with the loan.

Borja said Quichocho updated him and sought further instructions from him regarding the MPLT loan issue and the legal opinion.

"At some point, when it was clear to me that the proposed loan has serious constitutional and legal issues, I instructed attorney Quichocho to abandon the legal opinion," the Borja said.

The municipal council chairman said that Quichocho has provided "excellent legal advice and services" since he began representing the 12th Tinian Municipal Council.

Tinian mayor-elect Dela Cruz and the winners in the Nov. 7 election for Tinian positions in the Senate and the House are suing incumbent Tinian officials to stop a $1 million MPLT loan, which they said is based on an unconstitutional law.

The plaintiffs sued outgoing mayor Jose San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian Sen. Joseph M. Mendiola, Tinian Sen. Henry San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian Rep. Edwin P. Aldan, and the Office of the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan for breach of fiduciary duty.

The incoming officials also asked the court to stop the incumbents from reassigning existing municipal employees to other departments or divisions, and from appointing new employees.

Last week, Judge Manglona issued an order prohibiting San Nicolas and Sen. Mendiola from entering into any loans or investments with MPLT on behalf of the Tinian municipality without first providing the Tinian mayor-elect and his co-plaintiffs at least 10 days advance notice.

TinES party showcases students' dance moves

Tinian Elementary School's SGO and staff hosted the school's annual Christmas Show last week, centered around a dance contest that showcased the talents of the upper grades. A group of nimble Fourth Grade boys won the dance competition.

Tinian Elementary School students wait patiently for the show to begin.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Parents crowded in to show their love and support for all performances.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Singing Stockings steal the show.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Little angels wait for classmates to find their place on stage.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Two group compete in Round 2 of the Christmas Dance Contest.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fourth grade boys win the dance contest.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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and Saturday, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

WELCOME the NEW YEAR 2010
at PIC

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New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet
6:30 PM to 9 PM, December 31, 2009
Adult $33, Child $16.50

New Year's Day Brunch Buffet
11 AM to 2 PM, January 1, 2010
Adult $26, Child $13

BIG BANG! 2010
NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN AT PIC

Seaside Grill Gala Dinner Buffet
9 PM to 11 PM, December 31, 2009
Dom Pérignon Package - $396 per couple, $35 per child
Bottega Petalo Package - $286 per couple, $35 per child
*Reservations required.

Savor a palatable four course dinner at Seaside Grill
6 PM to 9:30 PM, January 1, 2010
Adult $50, Child $25

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Seaside Grill
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For reservations, call 237-5170 or 237-5172. Local resident discounts apply.

Protecting coral reefs while building roads

The U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee announced a new Roadways Resolution at their recent meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which was introduced to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force at its bi-annual meeting by American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono.

The resolution requested the task force to establish a multi-agency working group led by the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop and implement an integrated plan that will allow road construction projects to proceed with resource protection as an essential element. Scientific research and monitoring show that roads are conduits for sediments and land-based sources of pollution to enter coastal waters, causing serious runoff and pollution impacts on coral reefs.

ON THE NET

- www.allislandscorals.org
  www.coralreef..gov

At the USCRTF business meeting, Tulafono also spoke about threats to coral reefs posed by terrestrial and marine debris left by the recent tsunami in American Samoa. He asked that NOAA assist in responding to short and long-term tsunami impacts.

American Samoa's Post-Tsunami Coastal Resource Assessment Report has identified significant tsunami-induced damage to local coral reef ecosystems and the governor emphasized the need for immediate action to remove marine debris and restore reefs.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a Partnership Funding Initiative to assist the AIC jurisdictions with local efforts to reduce the impacts of land-based sources of pollution on coral reefs. USDA will launch the Initiative by committing to provide $1 million to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff in southwest Puerto Rico's Guanica Bay watershed. The funding will come from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and will allow farmers to implement conservation practices that will result in water quality enhancements, thereby helping to protect coral reef ecosystems in the watershed.

The AIC is composed of marine resources managers from state, commonwealth, territorial and freely associated state agencies, working collaboratively with the USCRTF and federal agencies to conserve and protect coral reefs.

Members represent American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Associate members are from the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau and Republic of Marshall Islands. ***(PR)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy birthday to the best brother and son, J.R. Peter Nogis! Have fun and best wishes, may God continue to bless you dearly! We love you Jeb. Coming out from your family and friends.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP10-CHC-030

SUBMISSION: JANUARY 19, 2010 • TIME: 3:00 P.M.

"REGISTERED DIETITIAN (CLINICAL/RENAL) FOR THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTH CENTER"

THE RFP PACKAGE MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY IN LOWERBASE, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

ALL QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP IS DUE NO LATER THAN **4:30 P.M., LOCAL TIME, THURSDAY, JANUARY 07, 2010.**

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO US CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH PROPOSAL IF PREFERENCE IS CLAIMED.

/s/ **JOSEPH K.P. VILLAGOMEZ**
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
Director, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
2010-CDA-03RFP

CLOSING DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2010 • TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE FOR CDA TINIAN BRANCH"

COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL SPECIFICATION MAY BE PICKED UP AT THE COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SAIPAN OFFICE, GUALO RAI WAKIN'S BLDG. OR THE CDA OFFICE TINIAN AT THE KING'S BLDG. DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS OR BY FACSIMILE REQUEST TO 235-7147.

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO U.S. CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL IF PREFERENCE IS CLAIMED.

/s/ **MANUEL A. SABLAN**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB10-CGC-031 (1-3)

SUBMISSION/OPENING DATE: JANUARY 13, 2010 • TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"LEASE OF THREE (3) OFFICE SPACES
(1) - SAIPAN BRANCH
(2) - ROTA BRANCH
(3) TINIAN BRACH
FOR THE COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFIC EOF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOWER BASE DR., SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THIS IS FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT; AS SUCH, LOCAL PREFERENCE IS NOT AVAILABLE, BECAUSE ITS USE IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW GRANTING FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT.

THE LESSOR MUST COMPLY WITH CNMI PUBLIC LAW 15-23, ARTICLE 5, SECTION 8652 (A) - (D).

/s/ **JOSEPH K.P. VILLAGOMEZ**
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
Director, P&S

ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION (RCGC)
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 1547 ROTA, MP 96951

PURSUANT TO THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION, DIEGO M. SONGAO HEREBY ANNOUNCES THAT THE ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION'S REGULAR MEETING FOR MONDAY, 28 DECEMBER 2009.

DATE: **Monday, 28 December 2009**
TIME: **2:00 PM**
LOCATION: **Rota Casino Gaming Commission's Office**
Tatachog, Rota, MP 96951

AGENDA

I. **Call to Order**
II. **Roll Call**
III. **Adoption of Agenda**
IV. **Adoption of Minutes**
V. **Chairman's Report**

VI. **Old Business**
-Application of RTIC
-Application for Temporary Casino License
-Employment Application for RCGC Staff
-RCGC Loan

VII. **New Business**
VIII. **Miscellaneous**
IX. **Adjournment**

*At anytime during the meeting, the Commission may move to Executive Session.

/s/ DIEGO M. SONGAO
Chairman

23, December 2009

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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PUBLIC NOTICE

(This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD Funds.)

Governor Benigno R. Fitial, Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, and the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairwoman, Ms. Marcie M. Tomokane, wish to announce that its Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) for Program Year 2008, is available for review and comments by the general public no later than December 29, 2009. Written comments must be submitted to the NMHC Office in Garapan, Saipan, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, or by contacting Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Planner/Grant Writer, at 234-9447/7689.

The report will be submitted to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Honolulu Office, by December 31, 2009. The CAPER encompasses the performance assessment of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership Act (HOME) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Programs in the Commonwealth.

The report is available at the NMHC Central Office in Saipan and at the respective NMHC Field Offices in Rota and Tinian during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ Marcie M. Tomokane
Chairwoman of the Board

NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity lender and employer.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

December 28, 1998

Tanker owner pays for reef wreck

The Division of Environmental Quality announced last week the payment of $100,000 by Inter Bulk Shipping Inc., owner of the oil tanker M/T Shogun, which ran aground near Rota's West Harbor last year. The payment was part of a settlement agreement reached between the company and DEQ, the Coastal Resources Management Office and the Municipality of Rota and to be used for environmental programs in Rota, Saipan and Tinian. The Shogun spilled approximately 800 gallons of bunker fuel into Rota's waters in Nov. 6, 1997.

Senate leader defends stay-limit bill

Senate President Paul A. Manglona defended their move to pass a legislation imposing a three-year stay limit on foreign workers on the island despite mounting pressure from local businessmen worried over the worsening economic crisis here. He said the proposal is designed to curb the influx of mostly Asian workers into the CNMI at a time when the indigenous population faces potential layoff and difficulty in finding jobs on the island. "It might be considered anti-business but we're also working to control our immigration here," Manglona told in an interview.

December 28, 1999

FY 2000 budget may not be approved this year

Despite attempts to push the FY 2000 budget approval, the Legislature will likely not pass the much-delayed spending proposal anytime soon following concerns on some provisions setting aside surplus funds from personnel for salary increase of government employees. The administration has reportedly opposed the plan contained in the budget bill due to the continuous financial difficulties confronting the CNMI. The House of Representatives is expected to discuss the proposal in a session scheduled for today if there are at least 14 members attending. House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Karl T. Reyes said that such provisions will mean that any lapse funds from personnel budget can be used only for salary hike and not for other critical programs, such as scholarship and medical referral.

2 wounded on Christmas Eve riot

Two Micronesians were wounded when a riot broke out between two groups of men who were drinking at the Fishing Base in Garapan last Saturday. Based on a sketchy police report, victims Paul F. Torwain, 25, a Yapese, and his friend Dohn E. Aia, 26, s Pohnapeian, sustained serious injuries during the fight. Torwain sustained a stab wound while Aia sustained two lacerations on the face, abrasions and bite marks on his left shoulder. Suspect Rodney A. Santos, who was nabbed at the USP parking lot, and three others had been arrested by police authorities.

December 28, 2000

More complaints vs. savings scam

The number of Chinese garment factory workers who were victimized in a savings scam has risen to 60 and police expect the number to increase further as investigators dig deeper into the case. Police investigators have appealed to the garment factory workers to file their complaint as they gather more evidence against Chinese couple Lin Zu Xiu and Li Rui Yuan, alleged mastermind of the scam. Capt. Delbert Sablan yesterday said the couple are also being investigated for allegedly collecting $6,000 each from 10 Chinese nationals in exchange for the issuance of their entry permits in 1998 and 1999.

6 new markets for tourism identified

The CNMI government through the Strategic Economic Development Council has identified six emerging tourist markets expected to help revive the local tourism industry, following three years plagued with dwindling visitor arrivals. These new markets are anticipated to help the administration of Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio achieve its goal to welcome additional 37,000 visitors in the Northern Marianas by end of the Fiscal Year 2001 in September next year. The Commonwealth has been advised to put emphasis on the emerging tourism markets in Asia that include Pusan in South Korea, Taipei, and Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Sendai in Japan.

Guam gets $782,743 in homeless grants

Funding to support 6 existing housing and service programs

WASHINGTON—The Obama Administration said yesterday that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is renewing grant funding needed to keep six local homeless assistance programs throughout Guam operating. The funding is part of nearly $1.4 billion that will help an unprecedented 6,400 existing programs nationwide to continue offering critically needed housing and services to homeless persons and families.

The grants announced yesterday are being awarded through HUD's *Continuum of Care* programs. HUD is providing renewal grants to local programs to prevent any interruption in federal assistance and will announce funding to new projects in early 2010.

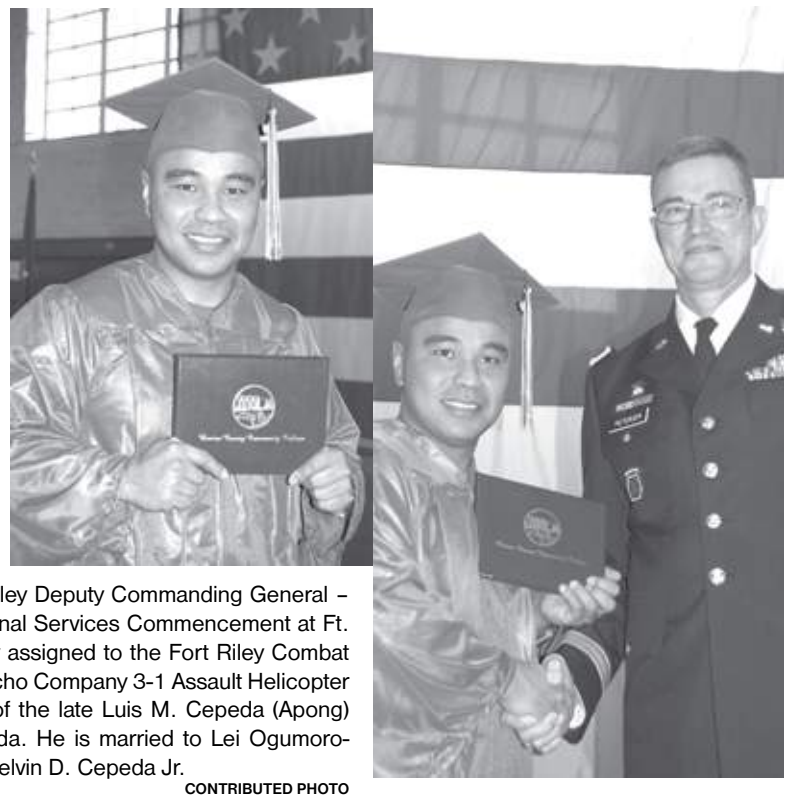
"As we move into the coldest time of the year, it's critical that no program risk running out of money to keep their doors open," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "These grants will make certain that those programs on the front lines of helping the homeless have the resources they need to house and serve persons who might otherwise be forced to turn to the streets."

HUD's *Continuum of Care Grants* provide permanent and transitional housing to homeless persons. In addition, Continuum grants fund important services including job training, health care, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment and child care. *Continuum of Care* grants are awarded competitively to local programs to meet the needs of their homeless clients. These grants fund a wide variety of programs from street outreach and assessment programs to transitional and permanent housing for homeless persons and families (see attached summary of the funding awarded today).

Based on the department's latest homeless assessment, chronic homelessness has declined since 2005. This decline is directly attributed to HUD's homeless grants helping to create significantly more permanent housing for those who might otherwise be living on the streets. However, data also indicates that family homelessness may be on the rise, particularly in suburban and rural areas.

Earlier this year, HUD allocated an additional $1.5 billion through its new *Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program*. Made possible through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*, HPRP is intended to prevent persons from falling into homelessness or to rapidly re-house them if they do. ***(PR)***

NEW GRADUATE



Congratulations to Private First Class Kelvin Matagolai Cepeda for recently graduating from Barton County Community College with an associate degree in General Studies at Ft. Riley, Kansas, on Dec. 11, 2009. Cepeda also won the Brigade Soldier of the Quarter Competition held on Dec. 1, 2009, and was selected as the Battalion Soldier of the Month for September 2009. Inset shows Cepeda accepting his diploma from Brig. Gen. David Petersen, 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley Deputy Commanding General – Rear, during the Educational Services Commencement at Ft. Riley. Cepeda is currently assigned to the Fort Riley Combat Aviation Brigade, under Echo Company 3-1 Assault Helicopter Battalion. He is the son of the late Luis M. Cepeda (Apong) and Guadalupe M. Cepeda. He is married to Lei Ogumoro-Uludong and has a son, Kelvin D. Cepeda Jr.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Illegal fishing draws $439,000 settlement in Cooks

Two Japanese vessels caught without licenses

RAROTONGA, Cook Islands (Cook Islands News)—A NZ$1 million [US$439,159] settlement has been negotiated involving unlicensed fishing by two Japanese-flagged vessels earlier this year.

Minister of marine resources and acting prime minister, Robert Wigmore announced the settlement, after negotiations between the Japanese industry and the ministry.

The vessels, Koyu Maru 1 and 3, were detected fishing in the northern part of the Cook Islands exclusive economic zone by the ministry of marine resources, who were ably assisted by the Greenpeace vessel Esperanza.

However, the vessels could not be apprehended before they had left the EEZ and entered American Samoan waters.

The settlement, which was concluded at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) annual session in Papeete last week, includes a compensatory payment of NZ$1 million to the Cook Islands government.

The Cooks also received a commitment from the Japanese government to cooperate in surveillance and enforcement activities as well as provide broad assistance with offshore fisheries development initiatives.

Wigmore said that the settlement is a very good result, considering that the vessels were not apprehended.

He said that it proved the value of the black-listing procedure adopted by WCPFC in assisting small island countries to bring illegal fishers to account.

According to ministry officials, prosecution under the penalty provisions of the Marine Resources Act was not possible.

"The fact that the offending vessels were not arrested was a major obstacle – and a negotiated settlement was the appropriate course of action," said a media release from Wigmore.

Wigmore praised the efforts of the Cook Islands delegation that negotiated the settlement in Papeete, as it represented a significant advance over the $250,000 settlements negotiated for each of the two vessels detected in 2008. The delegation consisted of ministry officials and an official from foreign affairs.

Wigmore also revealed that the ministry had played a crucial role in assisting Tokelau in their negotiations with the same fishing company, which had resulted in a settlement of $400,000.

LEGAL NOTICE
ATTENTION

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Department of Justice, gives notice that the property listed below was seized for forfeiture pursuant to Title 21, United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 881, because the property was used or acquired as a result of a violation of the Controlled Substances Act (Title 21, U.S.C., Sections 801 et seq.). An owner or lienor may file a petition for remission or mitigation of the forfeiture with the Forfeiture Counsel, Asset Forfeiture Section, Office of Operations Management, Drug Enforcement Administration, HQs Forfeiture Response, P.O. Box 1475, Quantico, Virginia 22134-1475, pursuant to Title 19, U.S.C., Section 1618, and the regulations governing the petition process set forth in Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 9. Correspondence sent via private delivery must be sent to the Asset Forfeiture Section, Office of Operations Management, Drug Enforcement Administration, 8701 Morrissette Drive, Springfield, Virginia 22152. **In addition to, or in lieu of petitioning for remission or mitigation, a person may contest the forfeiture of the seized property in UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT by filing a claim with the Forfeiture Counsel of the DEA pursuant to Title 18, U.S.C., Section 983(a).** Upon the filing of a claim under Title 18, U.S.C., Section 983(a), a claimant may request, pursuant to Section 983(f), release of the seized property during the pendency of the forfeiture proceeding due to hardship. A petition, claim, or other correspondence shall be deemed filed with the Asset Forfeiture Section, when received by the DEA at either of the addresses noted above. Submissions by facsimile or other electronic means will not be accepted. **The names of persons or businesses appearing in this notice are not necessarily criminal defendants or suspects, nor does the appearance of their names in this notice necessarily mean that they are the target of DEA investigations or other activities.**

THIRD NOTICE
LAST DATE TO FILE JANUARY 28, 2010
PLACE SEIZED, SEIZED FROM, DATE SEIZED

DISTRICT OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
09-DEA-520924, $1,407.00 U.S. Currency, Saipan, MP, Huang, Ya Bin, 08/20/09
09-DEA-521043, Men's Omega Constellation Wristwatch, Ser No 3961201, Saipan, MP, Huang, Biao, 08/17/09

[The property listed above is NOT for sale. The DEA DOES NOT sell forfeited property and the DEA DOES NOT have information on property for sale.]

Invitation for Bids IFB10-GOV-034

Security Services for Water Task Force Warehouse

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, through the Water Task Force, are soliciting sealed Bids for Security Services for the Water Task Force Warehouse on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project Scope of Work will be available at the Office of the Director, Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, on or after **December 21, 2009.**

A mandatory Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for **10:00 a.m.** local time, **January 8, 2010**, at the CNMI Water **Task Force Conference Room, 1316 Anatahan Dr., Capitol Hill, Saipan.**

All questions regarding this IFB must be submitted in writing no later than **4:30 pm, January 6, 2010**, to Mr. Pedro Sasamoto, WTF Program Manager, facsimile number (670) 664-2279.

Bids must be sealed and marked **"IFB10-GOV-034"**. For bidders within the CNMI, one (1) original and four (4) copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than **3:00 p.m**. local time, **January 20, 2010**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bid by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than **3:00 p.m.** local time, **January 20, 2010,** and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515. For bidders located outside the CNMI, one (1) original and four (4) copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **January 20, 2010,** and must be received no later than **January 29, 2010.** Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly open and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at 3:00 pm local time, **January 29, 2010**. However, if no Notices of Intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at 3:00 pm local time on **January 21, 2010**.

The bid procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Preference is not available to local bidders in this procurement because its use is prohibited by the Federal law granting the funds for this project.

The CNMI reserves the right to reject any or all Bids and to waive any imperfections in any bid if to do so will be in the best interest of the CNMI. All Bids shall become the property of the CNMI government.

BENIGNO R. FITIAL
Governor

HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director, Procurement & Supply

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XIX, Issue No. 312

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP 96950

Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Swine flu follow-up

When the heads of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases came to see us last week, they had some good news. The second wave of the H1N1 virus (known to the rest of us as swine flu) had reached a plateau. It has remained relatively mild. And there are now enough doses of the vaccine for anyone who wants one. That last point is most important. The officials said the window of opportunity is open now to protect yourself against a possible third wave.

You'll recall that the first wave of swine flu hit in April in Mexico and the United States. It spread so quickly and so far that the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic in June. According to CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden, as of mid-November there were an estimated 47 million confirmed cases of H1N1 in the United States, 213,000 hospitalizations and nearly 10,000 deaths. That is fewer than the 36,000 who die annually from seasonal flu. What gives that number added significance is that 1,000 of the swine flu deaths were children. Dr. Frieden told us that's a five-fold increase over the number of children who succumb to seasonal flu.

One aspect of swine flu's second wave that continues to concern us was the federal government's inability to initially meet the vaccine production numbers it estimated. Dr. Margaret Hamburg of the FDA pointed out—and we recognize—that the Department of Health and Human Services moved quickly in the early days of the pandemic to get a vaccine produced in record time. But the continued dependence on egg-based vaccine production threw a wrench in the process. The H1N1 virus grew slower than anticipated, resulting in lower yields for vaccines and long lines of frustrated and worried people unable to get vaccinated. A new cell-based laboratory that came online in North Carolina last month will produce flu vaccines in about half the time of those from eggs. So that's a start.

By Monday there will be more than 100 million doses of the swine flu vaccine available. Dr. Anthony Fauci of the infectious diseases institute told us that the best way to avoid a third wave of infections is to get the vaccine shot or the nasal mist as soon as possible. Officials say all experience confirms that the vaccine is safe and effective. But there are still too many who eschew the shot. One popular assumption is that you could get the flu from the flu vaccine. When we asked if this were true, Drs. Fauci, Frieden and Hamburg practically shouted in unison: "No!" It is produced from a dead virus. So go to www.flu.gov and use the site's Flu Vaccine Locator to find locations near you that have seasonal and swine flu vaccines.

(c) 2009, The Washington Post

We must make 2010 the road to prosperity

By ANTHONY PELLEGRINO
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Pellegrino is a longtime businessman in the CNMI and is the former president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

Only a few days remain in 2009 before we enter 2010. How shall we enter this New Year? Shall we plunge in with both arms and legs grasping at uncertainty? Or shall we set a focused course and become determined to stay the course regardless of the costs? Are we willing to pay the sacrifice and devotion required to make 2010 year the road to our prosperity? Please read and reread the following quote:

A nation must produce at least what it consumes or it will become bankrupt. It cannot live on subsidies forever.

Too long the CNMI has lived on subsidies. We have become greatly dependent on the United States funding many of our functions. We have become dependent on foreign investors to build and operate our hotels and businesses. We have become dependent on foreign labor to do our work for us. What are doing for ourselves? How long can we continue on this road to self-destruction? Doesn't this situation remind us of children refusing to leave the comfort of their parents? When are we going to stand up and begin creating our own wealth?

I have repeatedly mentioned that the CNMI's roads and fields are paved with diamonds that we consistently are stumbling over. For some unfathomable reason we fail to see this. We have the natural assets and manpower to become a fully prosperous nation if only we wanted to. Some complain we lack the capital but that is not true. Money is available once a good plan is set. There are several industries waiting to propel us into economic prosperity, but we are not doing a much at cultivating them.

In the following remarks please forgive me if I come on strong. I am not trying to attack anyone or suggest that I know better than anybody else, because I really don't. I just want us to come out fighting mad and do something about our situation. I would rather try to succeed and fail than not do something because of excuses.

We are constantly crying: "We don't have the money. We don't have the personnel." I don't want to believe this. If we had the fighting spirit and a strong determination, we would overcome any problems. There is a saying I came across the other day:

If we don't like something, change it. If we cannot change it, than change our attitude. But don't whine!

Only a few years ago we had a thriving tourist industry. We were on the verge of reaching almost 800,000 visitors, only to see it plunge to less than 400,000 today. I have read and heard a lot of rationalizations why it happened. But I never heard that any of the reasons given are our fault. It is always outside influences. We refuse to accept the fact that part of the fault for the decline is ours.

Are we to believe that our tourism market is totally dependent on the way the winds blow and all we can do is sit in a huddled position and wait for it to blow over? Let's understand that the first step to change and improvement must start at home with us. We must create a market. A market doesn't exist unless we create it.

Are we still marketing the same we have been doing for the past 20 years? Have we made tourism a community project or only a government agency project? Have we learned what the tourists wants are? Are we willing to supply their wants? We must have a determined effort.

Let's not always say: "We need more money. We need more employees." We have had both of those and have wasted them to a large degree. What we need is determination with no excuses for failure. Let's walk the talk, not talk the talk. Let's learn from our errors. Let's learn from others who are succeeding.

Daily we discuss the buildup of Guam and wait with bated breath for it to happen. What if that buildup were never to happen? What would we do? Is there anything the CNMI can do to create its own wealth? We have an abundance of land that lies uncultivated. Who is guiding us to consolidate it and create a farming industry so that we can reduce the importing of much of our produce and fruits? We keep failing to accept the fact that every time we import items, we are exporting money that is needed to circulate here.

Who in the government is finding export markets for our produce and fruits? Where is the drive to build any industry in which we produce items and export to other countries? Does the export have to be only to the United States? Are there other markets that we can export to? If we don't export we will never earn any money. If we don't operate our own businesses, we will never earn any money.

For example, tilapia is being grown by some people here in their backyards. But has anyone considered the world market for tilapia? In 2009, the United States imported over 400,000 tons mainly from China. Some African nations have developed a booming economy by raising and exporting tilapia. The world market currently is estimated at 2,500,000 tons. Why can't we consider tilapia as a potential export item? It has become a fish in much demand. We can grow them year round. Take it from me; they are much easier and cheaper to grow than shrimp.

Previously I mentioned the potential of flowers and mushrooms for export. Is anyone looking into these markets? What are we waiting for? Are we crying no money! This is not a valid excuse. What do we need to get us started? *Simple—a strong desire to help ourselves and a strong desire to wean ourselves from dependency.*

We still have a lower wage advantage for several more years. By the time the wages catch up to U.S. standards, we will have become established in any markets that we enter. We will also have learned to improve our technology thereby keeping the market share. I could go on and on about the many opportunities to help ourselves, but you have heard me rant and rave about this for a long time.

Governor, we need you to take the lead in this venture of creating local industries. Please use your influence to help. The CNMI needs strong guidance to enter the export market. Please, governor, hire

See 2010 on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Americans doing well on happiness meter

By KEVIN HUFFMAN
Special to The Washington Post

The writer won The Post*'s America's Next Great Pundit contest.*

Conventional wisdom seems to be that this decade was a somewhat shoddy start to the millennium. We watched multiple unsustainable bubbles deflate before our eyes (tech stocks, home values, Tiger Woods). And, as many commentators have been eager to remind us, we close the year with higher debt, fewer jobs and deep political divisions.

Yet a glimmer of hope persists: We are, as a country, remarkably happy.

The recentAP-Gfk poll showed that 78 percent of Americans, when asked to "think about how things are going in your life in general," said they are very happy or somewhat happy.

Despite the deluge of depressing national data this year, one might reasonably ask: How should we measure ourselves, if not by our happiness?

Indeed, philosophers have grappled with this question since before there was a Christmas. Aristotle said: "Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." Our founding fathers listed its pursuit as one of our inalienable rights.

More recently, France's President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed that national well-being be measured alongside gross domestic product. And a growing academic field of behavioral and social science researchers have turned their attention to the age-old questions. What is happiness? What makes us happy? How do we know?

In the current issue of Science magazine, Andrew Oswald and Stephen Wu ranked states by the happiness of their residents, finding that people are happiest in Louisiana and least happy in New York.

While the rankings drew the most attention, the purpose of the study was to look at whether subjective assessments—how we rate our own happiness—should be trusted. Using a wealth of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oswald and Wu looked at the subjective assessments of happiness (on a one-to-four scale) of 1.3 million U.S. residents. Then they compared the results against objective quality-of-life assessments of different states (concerns such as weather, access to green spaces, violent crime and cost of living). The results correlated: People in states that are objectively nice places to live rate themselves as happier. Ergo, when people say they are happy, they probably are.

But do we know what makes us happy?

"That's a good question," Wu said in a telephone interview, pointing to the quality-of-life indicators as a good starting point. Later, as I was looking out at my post-blizzard yard, Oswald told me: "I've frozen myself in Michigan and New York and basked in warm states, and I have a sense that it matters."

Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute and author of two books on happiness, doesn't buy weather or other external factors, including money, as real drivers of happiness. In his interpretation, the state rankings reflect political viewpoints—each of the bottom 10 states on the happy meter voted for Obama in 2008. Brooks also points to research showing that 44 percent of conservatives are "very happy," but only 25 percent of liberals describe themselves that way. He says half of the difference, statistically, is lifestyle—mostly rates of marriage and religious worship—and half is attitude.

None of these drivers is particularly helpful to me. I won't be voting Republican or moving to Louisiana in the near future (though, after hearing a friend use "joie de vivre" to explain Louisiana's top ranking, maybe I should reconsider). But I am among the 78 percent of happy Americans, which leads me to ponder what more, exactly, we are striving for.

Tal Ben-Shahar, who teaches positive psychology at Harvard and has written extensively on happiness, calls it "the end toward which all other ends lead." He writes: "Wealth, fame, admiration and all other goals are subordinate and secondary to happiness; whether our desires are material or social, they are means toward one end: happiness."

This year was a near-constant assault on the senses from people confusing means with ends. Bernie Madoff, Balloon Boy, Mark Sanford, the Salahis, Tiger Woods. It is easy to view them all as representative of our culture, a fitting end to a rotten decade.

And yet most of us aren't, in fact, bilking or scheming or faking or aspiring to reality TV. If happiness is the point, four in five Americans already are on the right track, and that should make all of us more optimistic about the decade to come.

Elderly felons need a prison break

By DAVID FATHI
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Fathi is director of the U.S. division at Human Rights Watch.

Sometime in the 1970s, the United States began a love affair with incarceration that continues to this day.

After holding nearly steady for decades, our prison population began to climb as criminal justice policy took a sharply punitive turn, with the massive criminalization of drug use, "three strikes" laws and other harsh sentencing practices. More people were going to prison and staying there longer. By 2005, the prison population was six times what it had been in 1975.

One little-known side effect of this population explosion has been a sharp increase in the number of elderly people behind bars. According to the Justice Department, in 1980 the United States had about 9,500 prisoners age 55 and older; by 2008, the number had increased tenfold, to 94,800. That same year, the number of prisoners 50 and older was just shy of 200,000—about the size of the entire U.S. prison population in the early 1970s.

People age 50 or 55 may seem a bit young to be classified as elderly. Because their lives have often been characterized by poverty, trauma and limited access to medical care and rehabilitative services, most prisoners are physiologically older than their chronological age would suggest, and more likely to have disabling medical conditions than the general population.

One study cited by Ronald H. Aday in his 1994 article in Federal Probation concluded that the average prisoner over 50 has a physiological age 11.5 years older than his chronological age.

With 1 in 11 U.S. prisoners serving a life sentence—in some states, the figure is 1 in 6—it's no surprise that the number of elderly prisoners is skyrocketing.

In 2007, The New York Times profiled Charles Friedgood, 89, a New York state prisoner who had served more than 30 years of a life sentence for second-degree murder. Although he had terminal cancer and had undergone several operations, including a colostomy, he had been denied parole five times before being released in 2007. Friedgood at least had the opportunity to apply for parole; in some states, parole has been abolished and a life sentence means exactly that.

Being in prison is hard on anyone, but elderly people face special dangers, particularly if they are ill or disabled. Some have complex medical and mental health needs that prisons are ill-equipped to handle. Many prisons are not accessible to persons with mobility impairments; for them, bathing, using the toilet or even getting in and out of their cells can be a difficult, dangerous challenge. And older prisoners are more likely to be robbed, assaulted or otherwise victimized.

Some states have so many elderly prisoners that they have built special facilities to house them. Several years ago, I visited the Ahtanum View Corrections Center, Washington state's prison for the elderly. Everywhere I looked were aged, frail, disabled people, some of whom could barely move without assistance. The prison's Web page helpfully points out that a volunteer clergy team is available to assist prisoners with "end-of-life issues."

The main justification for incarceration is to protect public safety. But it's hard to see the public safety rationale for keeping so many elderly people in prison.

It's even harder to understand the economic justification. Incarceration is expensive—about $24,000 per year for the average prisoner, according to a 2008 Pew Center on the States report. Keeping someone over 55 locked up costs about three times as much. Given that criminal behavior drops off dramatically with advancing age, this is a major investment for very little return.

As the United States faces its worst fiscal crisis in decades, many states are taking a hard look at their prisons, which consume a large and increasing portion of state budgets. As part of this long overdue re-examination, lawmakers should ask whether so many elderly people really need to be in prison and whether the state should be in the business of operating nursing homes with razor wire.

Letter to the Editor

Explosive firecrackers

I thought it was only in my own neighborhood, but according to the coconut wireless, over the last week or so firecrackers have been going off all over the island, from as early as 7am until as late as 11pm. What I want to know is, where are they coming from?

Public Law 15-127, which was signed into law in February of '08, prohibits the *sale, possession or use* of fireworks, except those consigned to the CNMI or federal government—not to be discharged except under the direct supervision of one of the said governments—or those authorized for public or private display by permit from the Fire Chief.

Under the law, sparklers, caps as used in toy pistols, snakes and similar smoke-producing material, model rockets and rocket motors, and something identified as "those items described in ORS 480.127(4)" are exempted from the prohibition, but what I am hearing, and what is going off are not merely caps—they are far noisier booms. Nor are they "display" fireworks. They're just plain noise-makers, or as the law puts it, "explosive-like firecrackers."

P.L. 15-127 was passed because of a concern for the safety of the island's children, several of whom had been injured in the months just preceding passage of the law, because of a concern for tourists, who had complained about the loud noises late at night and because of a concern for everyone else affected by the noisy explosions.

Is there no longer a concern for the health and safety of the island's children? Is there no longer a concern for tourists? Is there no longer an interest in enforcing the law?

The fact that a law that is less than two years old is already being ignored just confirms the impression that the CNMI is a lawless place where crime goes unpunished.

Commissioner of Public Safety, Attorney General, won't you please exercise your authority so that island residents—and tourists—are able to observe and respect the peace and love of the holiday season?

Ruth L. Tighe
Tanapag, Saipan

2010

From Page 10

one or two experts who have been in the various industries that we wish to cultivate. Have them become the driving force for the rest of us. Instruct them to set up farms, fisheries, whatever is desired. The individuals selected must be motivated to help the community develop, not themselves.

No, please do not hire from within the present population. If there were someone already here with a strong drive, that individual would already be doing what I have been preaching for so long. The people hired must be from outside and from the commercial areas we wish to cultivate and have been in that industry for a period of time

Once a plan of action is made, money is available from various sources. I know this for a fact. So lack of funding is not the problem. We must create an entrepreneurial spirit in our people. This spirit of self-sufficiency is created, not inborn. We can and must do it!

So as the New Year 2010 approaches, let us not make some silly New Year's resolutions that we forget in a few days. Instead, let's determine that 2010 is the year in which we started on the road to self-sufficiency, no matter how small. Remember a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Other island countries have done it. To name only a few: Guam, Hawaii, Singapore, Tahiti, and the Bahamas Islands. Each has created its own niche market. Let's find our niche and work it!

I'm going to make 2010 a great year. Join with me and let's do it together. Let us seize the day! Let us become a proud nation that earns its own bread. How sweet it will taste. This is our year 2010! May God bless us all! Happy New Year!

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°

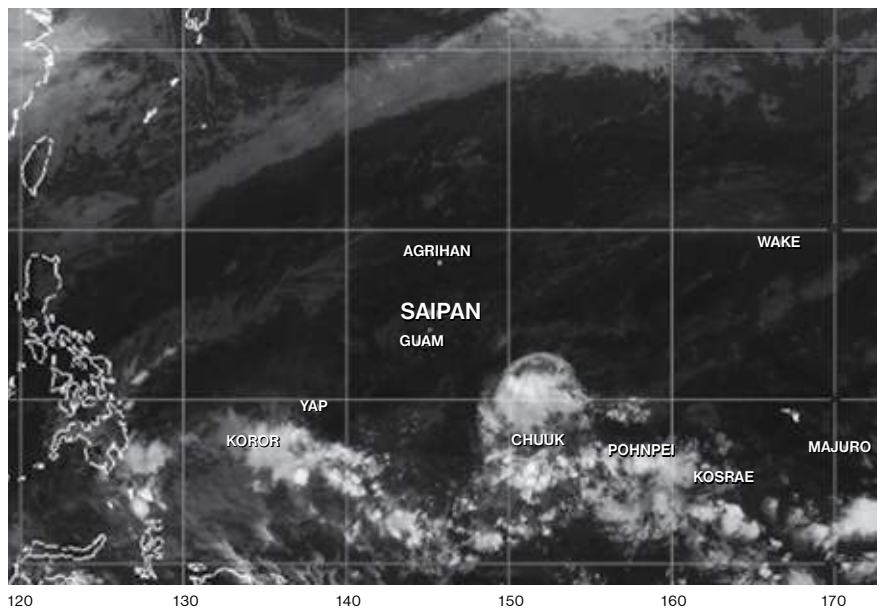
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼75
Palau	Sunny	▲85	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲87	▼77
Chuuk	Rain	▲89	▼79
Pohnpei	Showers	▲90	▼81
Kosrae	Showers	▲87	▼77
Majuro	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼79

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Sunny	▲72	▼64
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲28	▼14
Hong Kong	Rain	▲61	▼57
Honolulu	Sunny	▲80	▼67
London	Partly Sunny	▲40	▼37
Los Angeles	Mostly Cloudy	▲66	▼46
Manila	Sunny	▲87	▼75
Melbourne	Sunny	▲81	▼58
Miami	Cloudy	▲77	▼55
New York	Rain/Snow	▲38	▼24
Osaka	Showers	▲48	▼34
Paris	Rain	▲44	▼44
Pusan	Sunny	▲40	▼21
Rome	Showers	▲50	▼49
Salem	Partly Sunny	▲41	▼32
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	▲55	▼44
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲27	▼12
Tokyo	Partly Sunny	▲54	▼33
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲44	▼26

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from 25N139E across 130E at 20N. Cloudiness and scattered showers are found along and up to 200 miles northwest of the front. A near-equatorial trough extends southeastward from a weak circulation near 3N130E to end near EQ157E. Low-level convergence near the trough is causing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms southeast of Koror within 125 miles of a line from 7N135E to 2N145E. A surface trough near Chuuk extends from 12N150E to 9N152E with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms in an area from 12N150E to 9N160E to 9N149E back to 12N150E. Trade-wind convergence is triggering scattered showers and a few thunderstorms from south of Chuuk to near Pohnpei and just south of Kosrae in an area from 5N149E to 7N155E to 7N160E to 2N166E back to 5N149E and near Butaritari within 50 miles of a line from 2N170E to 3N173E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

5:37 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.5 Feet
10:05 AM	Today	Low Tide:	1.2 Feet
3:39 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
1:21 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Tuesday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Wednesday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Thursday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	2:22 PM	2:43 AM
Tuesday	3:16 PM	3:43 AM
Wednesday	4:16 PM	4:46 AM
Thursday	5:22 PM	5:50 AM
Friday	6:29 PM	6:52 AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA	6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA	8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business

Airline passengers see tighter security

By JOSHUA FREED and JOAN LOWY
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

Extra pat-downs before boarding. No getting up for the last hour of the flight. More bomb-sniffing dogs. Airports worldwide tightened security a day after a passenger tried to light some kind of explosive on a flight into Detroit.

The Transportation Security Administration wouldn't say exactly what it was doing differently on Saturday. It didn't need to.

Passengers getting off flights from overseas reported being told that they couldn't get out of their seat for the last hour of their flight. Air Canada also said that during the last hour passengers won't be allowed access to carry-on baggage or to have any items on their laps.

The extra vigilance came after a man flying from Nigeria to Amsterdam to the U.S. tried to ignite a device just before the plane landed in Detroit on Friday. It compounded delays in a busy holiday travel period marked by snowstorms in the Midwest and heavy rain in the East.

The TSA security directive applied to U.S.-bound flights from overseas, according to a transportation security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly.

The official said passengers traveling internationally could see increased screening at gates and when they check bags, as well as other measures on flights such as stowing carryons and personal items before the plane lands.

Flight attendants on at least one domestic flight informed passengers of similar rules. Passengers on a flight from New York to Tampa on Saturday morning were told they must remain in their seats and couldn't have items in their laps, including laptops and pillows.

AP
Airport police monitor the entrance of Los Angeles International Airport in Los Angeles, Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009.

Passengers on a United Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Washington were not allowed to have anything on their laps during the descent into Dulles, or to open the overhead bins an hour before landing, said Nehmi Klaassen, 32, who made the trip on Saturday.

Klaassen, who lives in Amsterdam, said lines at the airport were "ten times" longer than usual this time.

Jennifer Allen encountered tougher security on her way from Amsterdam to Detroit on Saturday. Her Northwest Airlines flight was on the same route disrupted by the attempted attack a day earlier.

"They patted you down really well," said Allen, 41, an automotive engineer from Shelby Township, Mich. "It wasn't just a quick rub, it was a slow pat. They went through everything in your bags, went through the pockets in your pants, the pockets of your coat."

Sarabjit Dhillon, 35, of Sterling Heights, Mich., was returning to Detroit from a visit to India. Even her three young children got a pat-down.

"They had to open each and every item. They didn't tell us why they were doing it, they just said the United States wanted them to do it, to check everything," she said.

"The extra measures apply worldwide on all flights to the U.S. as of now and for an indefinite period," said Judith Sluiter, spokeswoman for the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism. Security procedures for other flights remained unchanged, she said.

FHB'S POPmoney: A secure way to send funds via email, mobile phone

HONOLULU, Hawaii—First Hawaiian Bank has become one of the first banks in the nation to enable customers to send money securely to friends and family via the person's email address or mobile phone number. FHB is making it easy for customers to send money directly through its secured online banking service, FHB Online, to just about anyone, anywhere with its convenient new "POPmoney" service.

ON THE NET
- https://www.fhb.com/email-popmoneynotice.htm

FHB customers can electronically send money using the innovative and convenient new POPmoney service to Pay Other People (POP). Senders can include a personalized e-mail or text message in the notification that will be sent to the recipients letting them know that funds are available for them to electronically deposit to just about any U.S. bank deposit account they choose. The recipient will be required to enter a secret code that is sent to the email address or mobile phone number provided by the sender to verify their identity.

In addition to the new POPmoney mobile and email transfers, FHB customers already have the flexibility and ease of "me-to-me" transfers (transfers between their accounts at First Hawaiian Bank and their accounts at other banks) and third-party transfers (transfers from their accounts at First Hawaiian Bank to someone else's deposit account if you have their bank routing and account information).

POPmoney is First Hawaiian Bank's latest effort to make banking more convenient for its customers.

First Hawaiian Bank (www.fhb.com), with assets of $13.8 billion, was founded in 1858 and is Hawaii's oldest and largest bank. It has 58 branches in Hawaii, three in Guam and two in Saipan. ***(FHB)***

Continental resumes direct Guam–Osaka flights

HAGATNA, Guam—Continental Micronesia celebrated the return of non-stop service between Guam and Osaka's Kansai Airport with an official gate ceremony at the A.B. Won Pat International Airport on Dec. 23, 2009 upon arrival of the first flight from Osaka.

The Guam to Kansai service will be operated with Boeing 737-800 aircraft with 14 seats in business class and 141 seats in economy on the routes. Flights will operate daily departing Guam at 7:10am and arriving in Kansai at 9:55am. Return flights will operate depart Kansai at 11am and arrive in Guam at 3:30pm.

With the reintroduction of the Guam to Kansai direct service, Continental will increase its service from the current eight cities, namely Sapporo, Sendai, Niigata, Tokyo, Nagoya, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka, to nine cities in Japan. Continental previously operated direct flights from Guam to Kansai from Sept. 4, 1994 through Oct. 1, 2003.

"The Guam to Kansai route is an important part of our growth strategy for the region that will benefit Guam as well as other destinations such as Saipan, Palau, Cairns and Nadi to which Continental provides convenient services via Guam," said Charles Duncan, president and COO for Continental Micronesia. "During the time we were not providing direct daily service, Continental was steadily operating charter flights during peak periods since 2006 to closely monitor the market. We are pleased to restart the Guam to Kansai service and are committed to working closely with our travel trade partners to ensure success of expanding our services in Japan."

Continental Airlines is the world's fifth largest airline. For more company information, go to continental.com. ***(PR)***

Even as economy mends, a jobless decade may loom

WASHINGTON (AP)—Call it the Terrible Teens.

The decade ahead could be a brutal one for America's unemployed—and for people with jobs hoping for pay raises.

At best, it could take until the middle of the decade for the nation to generate enough jobs to drive down the unemployment rate to a normal 5 or 6 percent and keep it there. At worst, that won't happen until much later—perhaps not until the next decade.

The deepest and most enduring recession since the 1930s has battered America's work force.

The unemployed number 15.4 million. The jobless rate is 10 percent. More than 7 million jobs have vanished. People out of work at least six months number a record 5.9 million. And household income, adjusted for inflation, has shrunk in the past decade.

Most economists say it could take at least until 2015 for the unemployment rate to drop down to a historically more normal 5.5 percent. And with the job market likely to stay weak, some also foresee another decade of wage stagnation.

Even though the economy will likely keep growing, the pace is expected to be plodding. That will make employers reluctant to hire. Further contributing to high unemployment is the likelihood of more people competing for jobs, baby boomers delaying retirement and interest rates edging higher.

All this would come after a decade that created relatively few jobs: a net total of just 464,000. By contrast, 21.7 million new jobs were generated between 1989 and 1999.

Economist David Levy, chairman of the Jerome Levy Forecasting Center, says the country faces a new era of chronically high unemployment, averaging 8 percent or more over the next decade.

The "New Abnormal," he calls it.

Levy thinks the New Abnormal also means average pay will dwindle, along with consumer prices. That would make it harder for households to pay down debt, he warns.

Sparse shelves greet post-Christmas deal hunters

By ASHLEY M. HEHER
AP RETAIL WRITER

Shoppers headed to America's malls Saturday, many with gift cards in hand, hoping to snag after-Christmas discounts. They were greeted with big markdowns—in some cases topping 75 percent off—but often found limited selection.

"Everything's been picked over," said Donna Brown, a 52-year-old hairdresser from Seaford, Del., as she sorted through what was left of the fleece pajamas marked down 60 percent to $11.99 at a J.C. Penney store in Salisbury, Md.

Crowds were mixed during the kickoff of the week after Christmas, which last year accounted for nearly 15 percent of holiday retail sales.

This year, it could be more important because snowstorms that socked much of the country cut sales by 2.1 percent for the weekend before Christmas compared with the same weekend a year earlier, according to research firm ShopperTrak.

AP
Delores Simmons, of Dorchester Mass., stands next to her cart after shopping in Framingham, Mass., Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009.

Retailers are counting on the days after Christmas to perk up overall holiday sales in a season that looks like it's been only modestly better than last year's disaster.

This year the calendar provides a full weekend just after Christmas for merchants to try to entice shoppers to ring up more sales before many close out the year.

"Nothing was amazingly stellar," NPD Group analyst Marshal Cohen said of the holiday season so far. "This is not going to go down as a Christmas for most people to really remember."

This Saturday, stores made a push to woo gift-card-toting shoppers Saturday by opening early, slashing prices and advertising big sales. "Wasn't under the tree? Get it now at the Apple Store," read one ad from Apple Inc.

Knowing holiday shoppers would likely spend less this year because of high unemployment, a move toward thrift and economic uncertainty, merchants carefully managed inventory for the season, buying less than a year ago when the economic meltdown surprised everyone and forced fire sales to get rid of excess goods.

Nation

Nigerian man charged in Christmas airliner attack

DETROIT (AP)—A 23-year-old Nigerian man who claimed ties to al-Qaida was charged Saturday with trying to destroy a Detroit-bound airliner, just a month after his father warned U.S. officials of concerns about his son's religious beliefs.

The suspect claimed to have received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, a law enforcement official said on the condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing.

Aides to President Barack Obama are pondering how terror watch lists are used after the botched attack, according to officials who described the discussions Saturday on the condition of anonymity so as not to pre-empt possible official announcements.

Rep. Jane Harman, D-Calif., chairman of a House Homeland Security subcommittee, said there were "strong suggestions of a Yemen-al Qaida connection and an intent to blow up the plane over U.S. airspace." Several officials said they have yet to see independent confirmation.

Some airline passengers traveling Saturday felt the consequences of the frightening Christmas Day attack. They were told that new U.S. regulations prevented them from leaving their seats beginning an hour before landing.

The Justice Department charged that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab willfully attempted to destroy or wreck an aircraft; and that he placed a destructive device in the plane.

U.S. District Judge Paul Borman read Abdulmutallab the charges in a conference room at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor, Mich. where he is being treated for burns.

An affidavit said he had a device containing a high explosive attached to his body. The affidavit said that as Northwest Flight 253 descended toward Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Abdulmutallab set off the device—sparking a fire instead of an explosion.

According to the affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Detroit, a preliminary analysis of the device showed it contained PETN, a high explosive also known as pentaerythritol.

This was the same material convicted shoe bomber Richard Reid used when he tried to destroy a trans-Atlantic flight in 2001 with explosives hidden in his shoes.

PETN is often used in military explosives and found inside blasting caps. But terrorists like it because it's small and powerful.

FBI agents recovered what appeared to be the remnants of a liquid-filled syringe, believed to have been part of the explosive device, from the vicinity of Abdulmutallab's seat.

U.S. authorities told The Associated Press that in November, his father went to the U.S. embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, to discuss his concerns about his son's religious beliefs.

One government official said the father did not have any specific information that would put his son on the "no-fly list" or on the list for additional security checks at the airport.

Nor was the information sufficient to revoke his visa to visit the United States. His visa had been granted June 2008 and was valid through June 2010. Officials spoke on condition of anonymity because neither was authorized to speak to the media.

The suspect smiled when he was wheeled into the hospital conference room. He had a bandage on his left thumb and right wrist, and part of the skin on the thumb was burned off.

He was wearing a light green hospital robe and blue hospital socks. The judge sat at the far end of a 10-foot table, the suspect at the other end.

Judge Borman asked the defendant if he was pronouncing his name correctly.

Abdulmutallab responded, in English. "Yes, that's fine." The judge asked Abdulmutallab if he understood the charges against him. He responded in English: "Yes, I do."

The judge said the suspect would be assigned a public defender and set a detention hearing for Jan. 8. The hearing lasted 20 minutes.

Attorney General Eric Holder made clear that the United States will look beyond Abdulmutallab. He vowed to "use all measures available to our government to ensure that anyone responsible for this attempted attack is brought to justice."

Abdulmutallab was in a terrorism database but not on a no-fly list. He lived in a posh London neighborhood.

AP

Airport police search a vehicle entering Los Angeles International Airport in Los Angeles, Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009. Aviation security officials worldwide boosted safety restrictions on travelers headed to the U.S. after an attempted Christmas Day terrorist attack on a flight from Europe to Detroit, imposing extra screening and new limits on carry-on luggage.

After United 93, air travelers react to threats

DETROIT (AP)—They heard a pop that sounded like fireworks. They saw a glow of flame followed by a rush of smoke. And that was enough for passengers on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 to pounce.

From several seats away, Dutch tourist Jasper Schuringa says he jumped to extinguish a fire ignited by a quiet man who just moments before allegedly told passengers his stomach was upset and pulled a blanket over himself. Schuringa said his first thought wasn't to signal a flight attendant or wait for an air marshal to break cover, but rather, "He's trying to blow up the plane."

"I basically reacted directly," Schuringa said Saturday in an interview with CNN. "I didn't think. I just jumped. I just went over there and tried to save the plane."

Aviation safety experts once would have called Schuringa's actions a mistake and cautioned passengers against fighting back during hijackings and other crises in the air. That was before the Sept. 11 attacks and the actions of passengers on United Flight 93, who learned while aloft about the hijacked jets that slammed earlier that day into New York's World Trade Center.

They staged a cabin revolt against the al-Qaida terrorists who had taken control of their flight and died when their plane crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pa. But they succeeded in keeping the jet from destroying another building that day, and their story became legend.

"I don't think people are going to sit back and let somebody kill them in the process of fulfilling their extremist agenda or whatever it happens to be," said Dave Heffernan, who helps oversee self-defense training for commercial flight crews at Valenica Community College in Orlando, Fla. "People have talked about it. They've thought about it. They have a plan of action."

ACROSS THE NATION

Grandpa: Kids of missing Utah mom in good spirits

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—The parents of a missing Utah woman spent an unhappy Christmas together with her two young children, the woman's father said Saturday. Chuck Cox said he and his wife were with the boys, ages 4 and 2, for several hours on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Both boys were in good health and spirits, Cox said in a posting to a Facebook page dedicated to the disappearance of his daughter, Susan Powell. "We went through the motions of Christmas, but it didn't fill the emptiness," he said. Powell, 28, has been missing since Dec. 7. Her husband, Josh Powell, has told police he last saw her at 12:30 a.m. on that day as he left their suburban Salt Lake City home with the two boys for a camping trip. Josh Powell failed to show up at work that day. Police consider him to be the sole person of interest in her disappearance.

2nd human skull found in forest near Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Investigators in Southern California have found a second human skull in a national forest close to where hikers discovered the first on Christmas Eve. Los Angeles County Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said Saturday it's unclear if there's any connection between the two skulls. Detectives and coroner's investigators came across the second skull in Angeles National Forest Saturday morning in a search of the area where on Thursday hikers found a skull with a bullet hole in it. Whitmore says the second skull showed signs of some form of trauma. He gave no further details. Both skulls were found in a region of the forest that was ravaged by a massive wildfire in August.

Winter weather disrupts travel in Plains and East

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—Drifting snow and cold rain that have plagued much of the country for days stranded drivers and airline passengers Saturday trying to get home after Christmas. Storms from Texas to the Upper Midwest that dumped 23.9 inches of snow in Grand Forks, N.D., and 18 inches near Norfolk, Neb., began subsiding, but blowing and drifting snow hampered visibility in many areas. Several motorists abandoned their vehicles on snow-covered roads in northeast Nebraska. Ten to 20 vehicles were stuck near Norfolk, but state troopers do not believe any motorists were stranded. Higher temperatures and rains in the East began melting and washing away last week's record-setting snowfalls, threatening the region with flooding.

Poet, anti-apartheid activist Dennis Brutus dies

NEW YORK (AP)—South African poet and former political prisoner Dennis Brutus, who fought apartheid in words and deeds and remained an activist well after the fall of his country's racist system, has died. He was 85. Brutus' publisher, Chicago-based Haymarket Books, said the writer died in his sleep at his home in Cape Town on Saturday. Brutus was an anti-apartheid activist jailed at Robben Island with Nelson Mandela in the mid-1960s. He helped persuade Olympic officials to ban South Africa from competition from 1964 until apartheid ended nearly 30 years later. Born in 1924 in what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, Brutus was the son of South African teachers who moved back to their native country when he was still a boy. He majored in English at Fort Hare University, which he attended on full scholarship, and taught at several South African high schools.

Suspect identified in kidnapping of Phoenix girl

PHOENIX (AP)—Phoenix police Officer Mike Burns had just finished searching a desert area for signs of a 5-year-old girl and the man who had kidnapped her as she played with her sisters on Christmas Day. No luck. But as Burns drove down a north Phoenix street, he spotted a truck that matched descriptions of the kidnapper's vehicle, and a man and a little girl inside. When the truck made an abrupt turn and sped off, Burns knew he couldn't let it out of his sight. About 10 minutes later, 45-year-old Larry Jon Ladwig was under arrest, and the frightened girl was rescued and taken to a Phoenix police facility that aids young victims of crime, where it was determined she had been molested. The girl was treated and is back home with her family, police Sgt. Andy Hill said.

Asia

Ferry sinks in Philippines; 3 dead, 22 missing

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A passenger ferry sank in the northern Philippines in a second sea disaster in three days. The bodies of three children were recovered and 22 people were missing Sunday.

Search-and-rescue teams rescued 63 passengers and crew of the MV Baleno-9 and were scouring the seas for others still unaccounted for, coast guard officials said.

Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo quoted survivors as saying the ship took in water from the bow ramp, causing it to list before going under near Verde Island off Batangas province, south of Manila, late Saturday.

Tamayo said a coast guard vessel found the bodies of three children.

The crew may have neglected to inspect the ship's doors before setting sail and some may have been left open, said Elena Bautista, head of the Maritime Industry Authority.

Transport and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza ordered the immediate suspension of operations of the ferry's owner, Besta Shipping Lines.

Sea accidents are common in the archipelago because of tropical storms, badly maintained boats and weak enforcement of safety regulations.

On Christmas Eve, a wooden-hulled ferry with 73 people on board collided with a fishing vessel near the mouth of Manila Bay. Twenty-four people remain missing.

Three bodies and 46 survivors have been recovered from that accident, which prompted President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to suspend operations of the companies involved in the collision.

Officials suspected Thursday's accident was likely caused by human error, but a formal inquiry was expected to begin Monday.

Last year, a ferry overturned after sailing toward a powerful typhoon in the central Philippines, killing more than 800 people on board.

In December 1987, the ferry Dona Paz sank after colliding with a fuel tanker, killing more than 4,341 people in the world's worst peacetime maritime disaster.

AP

Norma Mauhay, left, and her daughter Leslie grieve as they wait for news about the fate of her son Sunday, Dec. 27, 2009 at the port in Batangas City, south of Manila, Philippines.

Pakistan: US men had maps of nuclear power site

ISLAMABAD (AP)—Police are trying to determine whether five Americans detained in Pakistan had planned to attack a complex that houses nuclear power facilities, authorities said Saturday.

The young Muslim men, who are from the Washington, D.C., area, were picked up in Pakistan earlier this month in a case that has spurred fears that Westerners are traveling to the South Asian country to join militant groups.

Pakistani police and government officials have made a series of escalating and, at times, seemingly contradictory allegations about the men's intentions, while U.S. officials have been far more cautious, though they, too, are looking at charging the men.

A Pakistani government official alleged Saturday that the men had established contact with Taliban commanders and planned to attack sites in Pakistan. Earlier, however, local police accused the men of intending to fight in Afghanistan after meeting militant leaders.

The men had a map of Chashma Barrage, a complex that along with nuclear power facilities houses a water reservoir and other structures, said Javed Islam, a senior police official in the Sargodha area of Punjab province. He stressed that the men were not carrying a specific map of any nuclear power plant, but rather the whole of Chashma Barrage.

The detained men also had exchanged e-mails about the area, Islam said.

"We are also working to retrieve some of the deleted material in their computers," he said.

Pakistan has a nuclear weapons arsenal, but it also has nuclear power plants for civilian purposes.

It began operating its first nuclear power station with Canadian assistance in 1972. It has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the main international agreement meant to stem the spread of nuclear weapons technology.

India governor, 86, resigns after 3-woman sex tape

HYDERABAD, India (AP)—The 86-year-old governor of a southern Indian state resigned Saturday, a day after a television news channel broadcast a tape allegedly showing him in bed with three women, an official said.

Gov. Narain Dutt Tiwari's office has denied the allegation, denouncing the tape as fabricated.

Tiwari, a veteran governing Congress party leader in Andhra Pradesh state, sent his resignation letter to the Indian president on Saturday, citing health reasons, a state official said on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

The scandal hit as Andhra Pradesh is engulfed in social unrest. Outrage over a delay in creating a new state there erupted into violent demonstrations in several cities earlier this week.

Pressure mounted on Tiwari to quit after the tape allegedly showing him in bed with three women was broadcast Friday, prompting the opposition and women's right groups to hold street protests in Hyderabad, the state capital, demanding his resignation.

A statement issued on Friday by Aryendra Sharma, an aide to the governor, said "the news channel report is fabricated, false and malicious to tarnish the image of the governor."

The television channel ABN Andhra Jyoti News, broadcast the tape, said it was made in a sting operation. The three women were from his northern home state of Uttrakhand, it claimed.

They were brought to Hyderabad by another woman who was allegedly promised a mining lease by the governor in return for sexual favors, the television channel claimed.

Officials: Suspected US strikes kill 3 in Pakistan

MIR ALI, Pakistan (AP)—A suspected U.S. missile strike killed three people Saturday in a northwest Pakistani tribal region where militants focused on fighting the West in Afghanistan are concentrated, two Pakistani intelligence officials said.

The missile strike was apparently the latest in a lengthy campaign of such attacks by the U.S., which rarely discusses the covert program but has in the past said it has taken out several top al-Qaida operatives. Pakistan publicly opposes the strikes but is believed to secretly aid them.

Saturday's strike occurred in the Babar Raghzai area of North Waziristan and also wounded two people, the officials said. The identities of the dead were not immediately clear. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to media on the record.

The area targeted is used by militants from two major factions that are battling U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan—the Haqqani network and the militants of warlord Hafiz Gul Bahadur.

U.S. missile strikes in North Waziristan are sensitive largely because Pakistan has a truce with Bahadur. He agreed to stay on the sidelines as the Pakistani army has waged an offensive in South Waziristan against the Pakistani Taliban, a group that has focused on attacking the Pakistani state.

Missile strikes on his territory could endanger that deal, analysts have said. However, in the past the U.S. has indicated it will not hesitate to launch the drone-fired missiles if it tracks down an important target.

The South Waziristan ground offensive was launched in mid-October, but many leaders of the Pakistani Taliban are believed to have fled to other parts of the lawless tribal belt—including North Waziristan and the Orakzai tribal regions.

Information from the conflict zones is difficult to independently verify because of restricted access.

The operation in South Waziristan has coincided with a spike in militant attacks in Pakistan, putting the country on edge as more than 500 people have died since October.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Magma building up in Philippines' Mayon volcano

LEGAZPI, Philippines (AP)—Fewer earthquakes have been recorded in the Philippines' lava-spilling Mayon volcano, but magma continues to build up inside and any lull in activity could be followed by a bigger eruption, scientists said Saturday. A hazardous eruption remains possible within days, and residents who live near the volcano's slopes should not be misled into leaving the evacuation centers, where they spent Christmas, and venturing back to their homes, volcanologist Ed Laguerta warned. "The number of volcanic earthquakes has gone down, but this is just part of the eruptive cycle of Mayon," he said. The number of quakes decreased from 871 recorded during the 24-hour period ending Friday morning to 406 recorded during the next 24 hours, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

Bomb kills gov't official, family in NW Pakistan

PARACHINAR, Pakistan (AP)—Police say a bomb blast has killed a government official and his five family members in northwest Pakistan near the Afghan border. Police officer Naeemullah Khan says a bomb planted in the house of Sarbraz Saddiqi in Sadda city of the Kurram tribal region exploded Sunday morning. He says Saddiqi, his wife and their four children died. Khan says the blast is in retaliation for the military campaign against the Taliban in the region. There also have been kidnappings of government officials in the area. Pakistan's army is fighting militants and al-Qaida fighters in their heartland of South Waziristan. Militants are believed to have fled the offensive to neighboring areas, including the Kurram and Orakzi tribal regions.

NATO: Taliban commander dies in mosque shootout

KABUL (AP)—A heavily armed Taliban commander was killed during an pre-dawn shootout at a mosque in eastern Afghanistan, NATO said as it reported an American service member died in a separate attack. A joint Afghan-international force went Saturday to a compound in Wardak province to look for an insurgent believed responsible for planning attacks and buying weapons and parts for making bombs, the international coalition said. When the joint force approached the compound, the Taliban commander, armed with grenades and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, ran to a nearby mosque. Afghan security forces surrounded the mosque outside the town of Pirdad in the Nirkh district and called for him to surrender. When he didn't, they went inside.

Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—An American Christian missionary slipped into isolated North Korea on Christmas Day, shouting that he brought God's love and carrying a letter urging leader Kim Jong Il to step down and free all political prisoners, an activist said. Robert Park, 28, crossed a poorly guarded stretch of the frozen Tumen River that separates North Korea from China, according to a member of the Seoul-based group Pax Koreana, which promotes human rights in the North. The group plans to release footage of the crossing Sunday, he said. "I am an American citizen. I brought God's love. God loves you and God bless you," Park reportedly said in fluent Korean as he crossed over Friday near the northeastern city of Hoeryong, according to the activist, citing two people who watched Park cross and filmed it. The activist spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.

World

Israel kills 6 Palestinians in surge of violence

NABLUS, West Bank (AP)—Israeli troops blasted their way into the homes of three wanted Palestinians on Saturday, killing each in a hail of bullets and straining an uneasy security arrangement with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Israel's military said the three, affiliated with a violent offshoot of Abbas' Fatah movement, were targeted for killing an Israeli settler in a roadside ambush earlier in the week and had turned down a chance to surrender.

In the Gaza Strip, three young men approaching Israel's southern border were killed by shots from an Israeli helicopter gunship. Saturday's deaths made it one of the deadliest days in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since Israel waged war on Gaza's Islamic militant Hamas rulers a year ago.

The violent Nablus raids, after months of relative quiet, embarrassed Western-backed Abbas, whose security forces have been coordinating some of their moves with their Israeli counterparts and share a common foe, Hamas.

At the funeral for the slain men, Abbas' security policy was denounced by thousands of mourners, who chanted: "Why the coordination while we are under the bullets of the army?"

Abbas' prime minister, Salam Fayyad, rushed to Nablus in an apparent attempt at damage control, paying his respects at a large communal wake and condeming Israel. "This attack was a clear assassination, and I believe it is targeting our security and stability," Fayyad told The Associated Press.

AP

Israeli soldiers are seen during an army operation in the West Bank city of Nablus, Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009.

Israel did not let Abbas know of the raid in advance, said Maj. Peter Lerner, an Israeli army spokesman.

Saturday's killings put to the test an often strained relationship between Israel's military and Abbas' security.

Since the violent takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007, Abbas has gradually strengthened his control in West Bank towns to keep the Islamists there in check.

Palestinian leaders frequently complain that Israel is undermining these efforts by carrying out arrest raids in areas under Palestinian control. Israel counters that while the performance of the Palestinian security forces is improving, its military will step in when necessary.

Explosion rocks Hezbollah stronghold near Beirut

BEIRUT (AP)—Three bombs planted under a car exploded south of Beirut on Saturday, killing one person and wounding several others in an attack that apparently targeted an official from the Palestinian militant group Hamas, the state-run news agency said.

The official National News Agency said the explosion was caused by "three bombs tied to each other" that were placed under the car of an official believed to be from Hamas.

It did not identify the targeted official or the victims. One of the wounded was in serious condition, the report said.

Lebanese security officials told The Associated Press they could not independently confirm what caused the blasts or who the explosions targeted. The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, which controls the area, sealed off the streets in the southern suburb of Haret Hreik and prevented journalists from getting close to the scene.

One senior police official said the blast occurred in a neighborhood that houses an office belonging to Hamas.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV only briefly mentioned the blast Saturday, quoting Lebanese security officials as saying "an explosion in Haret Hreik targeted an office belonging to Hamas, causing a number of casualties." The broadcast offered did not elaborate, and a Hezbollah official contacted by The Associated Press said he had no information.

Pope in good shape 2 days after Xmas scare

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Benedict XVI appeared in good shape on Saturday as he addressed the faithful two days after a woman knocked him down at the start of Christmas Eve Mass.

Benedict spoke about the plight of persecuted Christians around the world and did not mention the incident in his message to a crowd gathered in a rainy St. Peter's Square.

On the day Christians commemorate St. Stephen, the church's first martyr, the pope remembered those who "undergo trials and suffering because of their faith" and urged prayers for them.

The 82-year-old pontiff was processing through St. Peter's Basilica on Thursday when a woman described by Vatican officials as mentally unstable jumped the barricades and pulled him to the ground as she was taken down by guards.

Benedict quickly got up and, though slightly rattled, continued with the Mass. The morning after, he delivered his traditional Christmas Day message.

While Benedict was unhurt in the tumble, a retired Vatican diplomat, French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, fell and fractured his hip in the commotion.

AP

Pope Benedict XVI greets the faithful prior to delivering the Angelus prayer from his studio's window overlooking St. Peter's square, at the Vatican, Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009.

Report: Iranian forces, demonstrators clash

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iranian security forces beat protesters in central Tehran on Saturday while hardline activists disrupted a speech by the country's moderate former president, reformist Web sites said, raising tensions ahead of opposition rallies expected during a key religious mourning ritual.

Several injuries were reported in Saturday's unrest, which came a day before the Shiite Muslim mourning ceremony of Ashoura. Opposition activists have held a series of anti-government protests since the death of a dissident cleric last week, and other rallies are expected during Sunday's Ashoura rituals.

Last Sunday's death of the 87-year-old Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a sharp critic of Iran's leaders, has given a new push to opposition protests, which have endured despite a heavy security crackdown since disputed presidential elections in June.

The Rah-e-Sabz Web site said forces, including the elite Revolutionary Guard and the paramilitary Basijis, used tear gas and pepper spray to disperse demonstrators. The forces also broke the windows of cars that were honking horns in protest. It said protests occurred in at least three areas of the capital.

The report could not be independently confirmed because the Iranian government has banned foreign media from covering opposition protests.

In other unrest, about 50 plainclothes hard-line activists interrupted a speech by the popular former President Mohammad Khatami and beat some of the audience, the pro-reform Salaam News Web site said. It reported several injuries, though further details weren't immediately available.

The attackers chanted slogans in support of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameini, it said.

Khatami was speaking at the former residence of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of Iran's 1979 revolution, in north Tehran.

Iran is marking the first 10 days of the Islamic month of Moharram, a time of mourning rituals for a revered Shiite saint.

WORLD BRIEFS

6 members of family shot to death in north Mexico

CIUDAD JUAREZ (AP)—Prosecutors in the Mexican state of Chihuahua say they found the bullet-riddled bodies of six members of the same family in a mountainous area. No motive was given for the killing, but drug trafficking, illegal logging and drug cultivation are all common in the northern region. State prosecutors' spokesman Eduardo Esparza says the victims are men between the ages of 45 and 55, and all from the same family. He said the bodies were found late Friday near a dirt road. Chihuahua state police said Saturday that two army battalions posted in the border city of Ciudad Juarez to fight drug-fueled violence would be rotated out, with fresh troops replacing them. The statement said such 60-day rotations are routine.

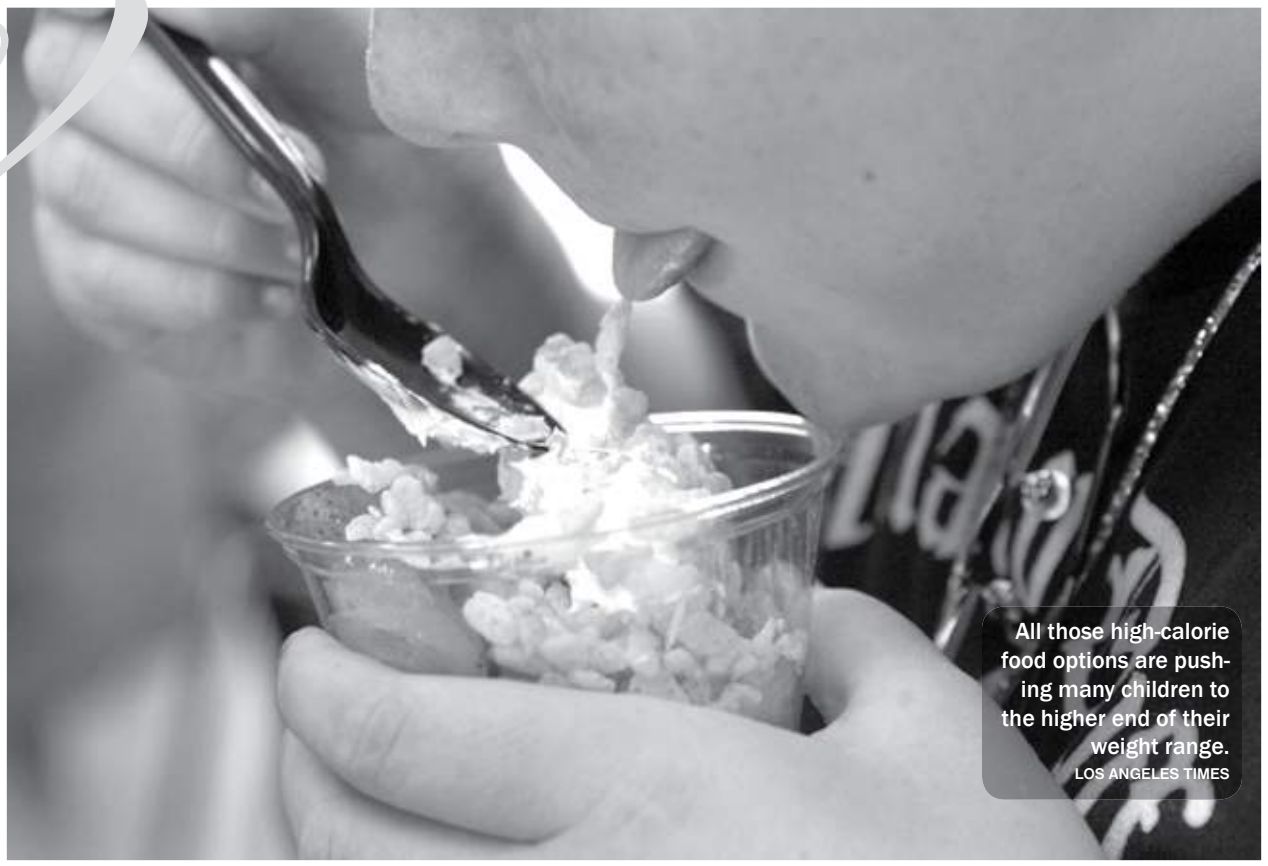
Croats choose 3rd president to lead nation to EU

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP)—Croatians on Sunday vote for president in an election marked by allegations of corruption that comes as the country tries to fight graft and smooth its entry into the European Union. Twelve candidates are running to replace popular President Stipe Mesic, who helped discourage the nationalism promoted by his predecessor in the 1990s and encouraged a shift to the West, including joining NATO this year and preparing the former Yugoslav republic for membership in the EU. The vote follows a campaign focused on the two issues that most bother Croatians: economic recovery and the country's widespread corruption. Several of the candidates have themselves denied allegations of corruption.

Activist who denounced Mexico border killings dies

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP)—Esther Chavez, a women's rights activist who first drew attention to the brutal slayings of women in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, has died, her nephew said Saturday. She was 73. Hector Chavez Arbizu said his aunt died of cancer on Friday and will be buried in Ciudad Juarez, where more than 100 women were strangled and their bodies dumped in the desert or vacant lots in a string of killings that began in the 1990s. Chavez founded Casa Amiga, a shelter for female victims of violence in this city of 1.5 million across the border from El Paso, Texas. She worked tirelessly to denounce the decade-long string of killings and to demand that the deaths be properly investigated. Most of the victims were young and many worked at border assembly factories known as maquiladoras.

Health & Fitness



All those high-calorie food options are pushing many children to the higher end of their weight range.
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Obese kids and the parental blame game

By AMINA KHAN
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

When Dr. Sadaf Farooqi and colleagues discovered a genetic abnormality that caused severe obesity in a handful of children, she had no cure. Yet the scientist transformed four families' lives nonetheless.

The British parents had been living in fear of losing their children—the youngsters' severe obesity had been seen as a possible sign of abuse or neglect, and they had been put on the list of the country's social services department.

"They were being blamed for their children's condition, receiving frequent visits from social services, frequent reviews, knowing people could have their children taken away," Farooqi said.

Farooqi told authorities that this abnormality—a DNA deletion—wiped out a key gene involved in the body's response to leptin, a hormone that controls appetite. The children were taken off the list.

Farooqi's study, published Dec. 6 in Nature, affected only five of about 1,200 severely obese youngsters. But as more genes related to obesity are unearthed, and as rates of childhood obesity climb, courts, social services and parents increasingly will have to grapple with difficult social and legal questions:

Can extreme childhood obesity be considered abuse? How much of a child's weight can be blamed on the parents, and how much is out of their control?

A three-decade rise in childhood obesity rates has meant that related abuse and neglect cases are more often making their way into the courts. According to a 2008 report by the Child Welfare League of America, "California, Indiana, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas have had to determine whether morbidly obese children whose parents are unable or unwilling to control their children's weight against medical orders are properly considered abused or neglected."

In 2007, North Carolina mother Joyce Painter was told she would lose her 255-pound, 7-year-old son if he did not show progress in his weight loss within two months.

And in June, South Carolina mother Jerri Gray lost custody of her son Alexander Draper after being charged with criminal neglect. The 14-year-old weighed 555 pounds. Gray is facing 15 years on two felony counts, the first U.S. felony case involving childhood obesity, said her lawyer, Grant Varner.

Such cases will require authorities to consider not only genetics but the helplessness parents can face in trying to regulate a child's behavior, especially that of a teen, in today's calorie-dense environment.

So far, genetic tests have played a limited role in cases of childhood obesity in which authorities have become involved (Draper has not been tested, Varner says). The tests are fairly new, expensive and assess only a few of the genes known so far to strongly influence obesity.

In any case, for all but a small number of people, genes tell only part of the obesity story.

"What genetics does is sort of set the range of weights for you," said James O. Hill, director of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of Colorado in Denver. "If you're somebody who is genetically predisposed ... you may never be lean, but there's still a wide range of weights in there."

But today's environment is likely to push many kids to the higher end of their range, said Dr. Marc Jacobson, who sits on the American Academy of Pediatrics' obesity leadership work group. In 1955, he said, McDonald's fries were 210 calories but the large portions more often consumed today are 500. A Coke was 6.5 ounces, versus 20 ounces in today's plastic bottles. No wonder, he said, that today U.S. kids have an obesity rate of 15 percent , and that another 15 percent are overweight.

"Food is available 24/7. Domino's delivers. We're not programmed for that kind of environment," Jacobson said. "We're programmed for an environment where food is scarce."

Some of the factors are hard for parents to control, especially if they live in disadvantaged communities, said ethicist Erika Blacksher, a research fellow at the Hastings Center, a nonpartisan bioethics research institution in Garrison, N.Y.

"It's unfair to hold parents accountable for factors such as whether their neighborhoods have safe places for their children to play ... or when their neighborhoods don't have grocery stores that sell healthy foods," she said. "We don't want quick, easy, negative, punitive responses and tools."

Melinda Sothern, a clinical exercise physiologist at Louisiana State University New Orleans who works with obese children, says physicians and social workers can be quick to rush to judgment and assume a parent is neglectful in such cases.

She cites an 8-year-old she treated who, at 6, had a body mass index of 48. The boy was so obese that he had to have knee surgery and use a machine to counteract his sleep apnea.

Genetic tests for two known obesity genes came up negative. The endocrinologist and social worker then suggested he be taken out of the home.

But, Sothern said, her patient's mother was a single working mom in post-Katrina Louisiana who was not quite poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. She was making her doctors' visits and enrolling her son in karate class.

Similarly, Varner said, Jerri Gray could not be held entirely responsible for what her son ate and did outside the home.

"She's a single mom. She's at work, busting her butt to make sure there's a roof over their heads, and this kid's at school six, seven hours a day," Varner said. "Trying to control a teenager—that's trying to knock down a solid brick wall with your bare hands."

Ask Dr. H

By DR. MITCHELL HECHT
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Dr. Mitchell Hecht is a physician specializing in internal medicine. Send questions to him at: "Ask Dr. H," P.O. Box 767787, Atlanta, GA 30076. Due to the large volume of mail received, personal replies are not possible.

Q: In products that use Equal/Nutrasweet as their sweetener, there is a sugar alcohol content. What other sugar substitutes have sugar alcohol amounts?—T.P. Jackson, Mich.

A: No, that's not quite right. Equal/Nutrasweet is a protein-derived sugar, and has no sugar alcohol content. I'm guessing that you got the mistaken impression from looking at the label of a "sugar-free" food like dietetic cake, cookies or candy. Those products use alternative sweeteners to sugar like xylitol, sorbitol, maltitol or lactitol. While they're derived from the alcohol molecule, they're 100 percent alcohol-free. Such sugar-free sweeteners are as different from alcohol as a drinking glass is to a handful of sand. Alcohol-free sugars have been used safely for many years to sweeten calorie-controlled foods, especially commercially baked goods and candy. While you may think of sugars as natural sweeteners derived from sugar cane or fruits, there are ways that through chemistry, other sugars can be created.

Sucrose, or white cane sugar, is the sugar against which all other sweeteners are compared. Xylitol, the sweetest of the alcohol-derived sugars, has about the same sweetness as sucrose. The other alcohol-derived sugars range from 0.4-0.8 times as sweet as table sugar.

While table sugar (sucrose) and fruit sugar (fructose) contain 15 calories per teaspoon, the alcohol-derived sweeteners contain about half the calories. But don't be fooled: cake and cookies that use these sweeteners still may be high in calories, since the flour and oil are plentiful in calories. The biggest "plus" of such sweeteners is that they allow diabetics to enjoy cookies or cake in moderation without causing huge spikes in the blood sugar. They also can help prevent cavities, since they're not converted to acids by bacteria in the mouth. Chewing sugar-free (xylitol or sorbitol sweeteners) gums like Trident or Carefree may cut your risk of cavities by encouraging better saliva flow across your teeth.

Folks who eat too much food or candy sweetened with an alcohol-derived sweetener may experience gas, bloating, or a diarrhea laxative effect. That's because they're slowly or only partially absorbed from the digestive tract. The more of it you eat, the more gas, bloating or diarrhea you'll get. Equal/Nutrasweet, saccharin, Splenda and Truvia won't cause this problem.

■■■

Q: Don't you think that all those commercials that air constantly about Viagra, Cialis, Lunesta, Boniva and the like are getting to be too much? Don't you think that they could spend less on advertising and make the drugs cheaper? —J.B., New York, N.Y.

A: Yes, I think they certainly could spend far less on advertising. But it would be naive to believe that reduced expenditures on pharmaceutical advertising would ever trickle down to the patient.

Until the late 1990s, drug companies largely marketed their products to health care providers. Beginning in the late 1990s, drug companies began saturating the media with direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising in print, television and radio formats. The Congressional Budget Office states that in 2008, spending on DTC advertising totaled $4.7 billion. While the pharmaceutical industry's PR/lobby machine known as "PhRMA" promoted the adoption of "self-enacted" guidelines on ethical conduct in the marketing of their products to health care providers—including the elimination of inexpensive pens, sticky notepads and mugs as "gifts", they have quietly redistributed their massive advertising budgets into DTC advertising. This has not brought down the cost of pharmaceutical drugs to the patient; rather DTC has become a more subtle means of influencing the prescribing of a drug company's specific product. The intent of DTC advertising is to use the patient to "create a dialogue" that'll result in a new prescription. It's nothing illegal, of course.

But it is using the patient to influence the prescribing habits of a clinician.

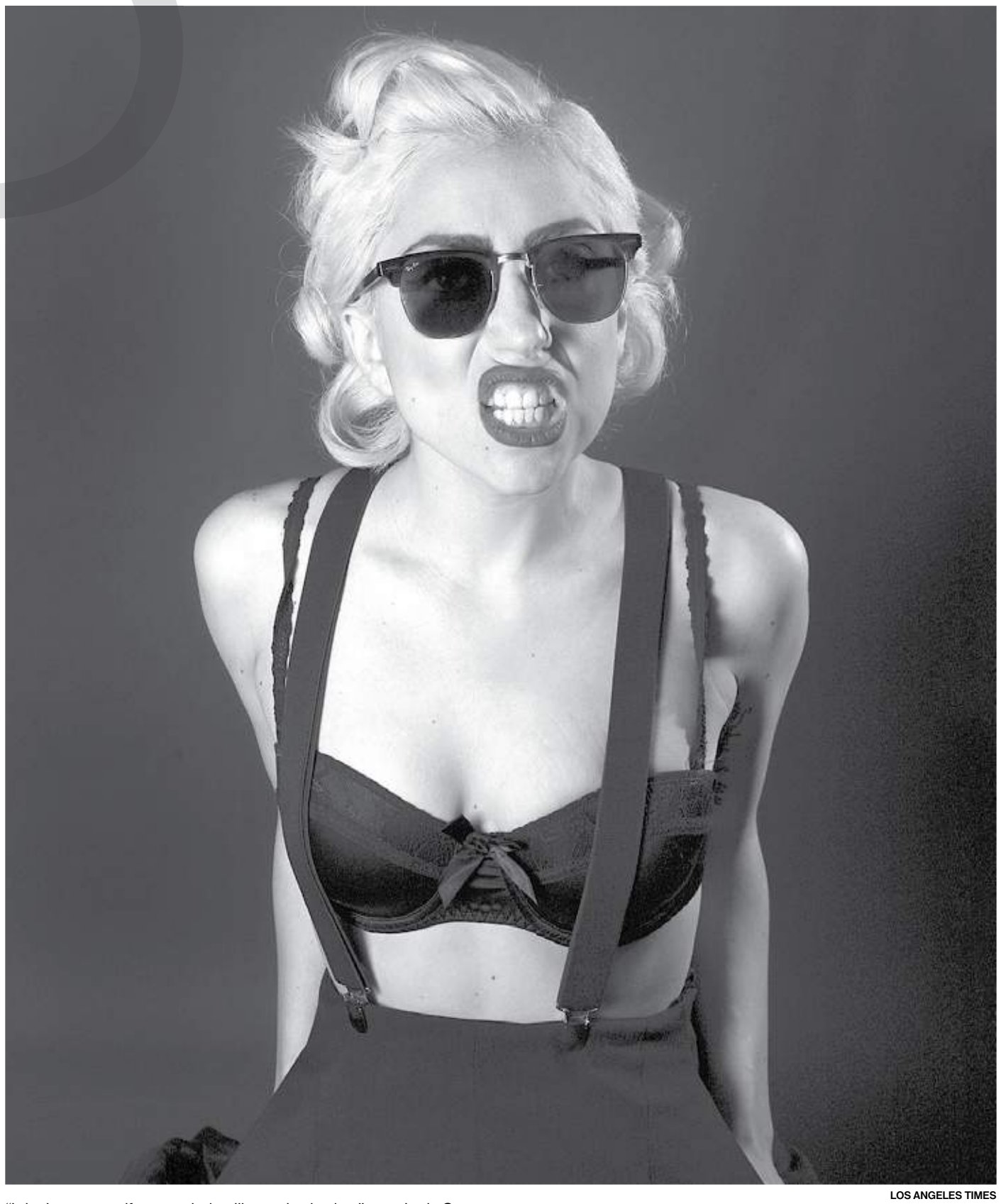
I've been told by numerous pharmaceutical representatives that if their companies did not adopt the 2009 PhRMA code of ethical conduct (which they self-enacted), the government was going to do it for them. That argument is ludicrous. One only needs to add up the millions of dollars received by our congressmen through lobbying to appreciate the enormous clout that the pharmaceutical industry carries in Washington. Who came out the winner on the Medicare prescription drug plan Congress enacted? And please don't get me started on the tobacco industry!

The pharmaceutical industry will correctly point out their coupons, cards and vouchers can save those with insurance coverage money at the pharmacy. But that is not the same as reducing the retail cost to the consumer.

Life & Style

Lady Gaga's multi-pronged campaign for self awareness

By ANN POWERS
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES



LOS ANGELES TIMES

"I don't see myself as ever being like anybody else," says Lady Gaga.

BOSTON—Almost immediately after she deposited herself in a corner booth at L'Espalier, the restaurant at Boston's Mandarin Oriental Hotel on the December afternoon after the first American date of her Monster Ball tour, Lady Gaga made a confounding statement.

"I don't see myself as ever being like anybody else," said the 23-year-old known to her mom (eating lunch nearby) as Stefani Germanotta. "I don't see myself as an heir."

Yet there she was, in a blond Hollywood bob and black tuxedo-bra combo much like the costumes Madonna wore 20 years ago, discussing a show that conjures the spirits of Michael Jackson, David Bowie and the punk-rock drag queens of downtown New York and promoting music—the newly expanded edition of her 2008 debut album, "The Fame," greatly enriched by eight new songs and repackaged as "The Fame Monster"—that pays blatant homage to ABBA, Queen, Eurodisco and Marilyn Manson.

Gaga doesn't care. She wants you to trace her references. "John Lennon talked about how with every song he wrote, he was thinking of another artist," she said, making a less expected connection to a pop deity.

She has yet to attain the status of the Beatles, but in the ever-accelerating pop cycle, Gaga is a top sensation, and many people's vote for the most exciting artist of 2009. "The Fame" has sold nearly 2 million copies in the U.S. and reportedly double that internationally; her album and the single "Poker Face" both made the top three on the year-end tally of top iTunes downloads.

"The Fame Monster" continues this sales sweep, but it also considerably advances Gaga's artistic project with some of her strongest songs yet, including the ear-worm-infested "Bad Romance" and the sumptuously emotional ballad "Speechless."

The world is responding. She has made friends with Madonna, been interviewed by Barbara Walters and met the Queen of England at the annual Royal Variety Performance. The Monster Ball has sold out multiple nights in major cities.

This is all happening not because Gaga is cute or takes off her clothes but because (to use one of her favorite words) she is a monster—a monster talent, that is, with a serious brain.

During nearly two hours of conversation, she not only reiterates her assertion of total originality but also finesses it until it's both a philosophical stance about how constructing a persona from pop-cultural sources can be an expression of a person's truth—a la those drag queens Gaga sincerely admires—and a bit of a feminist act.

"I'm getting the sense that you're a little bit of a feminist, like I am, which is good," she said. "I find that men get away with saying a lot in this business, and that women get away with saying very little ... In my opinion, women need and want someone to look up to that they feel have the full sense of who they are, and says, 'I'm great.' "

Gaga's casual use of the term "feminist" was interesting; like many female pop stars, she has rejected the term in the past. But she's evolving. She is growing "more compassionate," she says, and focusing more on ideas of community, especially the one formed by her core fan base, a mix of gay men, bohemian kids and young women attracted by Gaga's style and her singable melodies.

■ ■ ■

Her new songs address serious themes including women's shame about their bodies and the need for open communication in relationships; her often physically distorting costumes show that the pursuit of the feminine ideal is far from natural. Her commitment to confront the changing notion of what's "natural" puts Gaga on the same road traveled by artists she admires, such as the photographer Cindy Sherman. Her frank talk about how female artists aren't expected to write their own songs or about how young women are afraid to ask for what they need from their sexual partners inches her toward a new articulation of feminism.

"If you ask somebody where you see sexism in your life, all they think of is the old stuff," said Nona Willis Aronowitz, co-author of the new book "Girldrive: Criss-Crossing America, Redefining Feminism," by phone. "Equal pay, that's not really on their radar. Domestic violence and rape aren't necessarily in the forefront. But you ask about double standards or restrictive gender roles, they don't think of that as sexism; they think of that as the way it is. That's kind of like what Lady Gaga is talking about."

Gaga does view her music as a liberating force. "When I say to you, there is nobody like me, and there never was, that is a statement I want every woman to feel and make about themselves," she continued. "I don't make it as a defense. I make it as, OK, guys, it's been two years, and I've made a lot of music, and I know my greatness is individual. And I want every woman to be able to say that."

This is one of Gaga's gifts, maybe the one that most distinguishes her from the other talented women directing the pop zeitgeist right now, such as her recent collaborator Beyonce, her fellow couture hound Rihanna or her rival in redefining blondness, Taylor Swift. Gaga makes outrageous declarations—which, when you break them down, actually make sense. And then she backs them up, not only through her now famously provocative interviews but in her videos, her collaborations with designers and artists, her live performances and those infernally catchy hits.

■ ■ ■

As good a game as she talks, Gaga's real language is visual and, of course, musical. Discussing videos like the one for "Bad Romance," which she says is about "how the entertainment industry can, in a metaphorical way, simulate human trafficking—products being sold, the woman perceived as a commodity," or the Ace Bandage-adorned costume she wore at the American Music Awards, which she said was "meant to be feminine, healing, bondage gothic," she sounds more like an art critic than an evolving club kid.

"It's a feeling," she says of the way she builds these little horror musicals. "There is a narrative, but the narrative isn't nearly as important as the images are, sewn together."

As for the songs that serve as the foundation for all of her other forms of expression, Gaga says she never wanted them to be anything but massive hits. "I don't want to make niche-oriented music," said the songwriter, who entered the music business writing hits for other artists, including Britney Spears. "I don't like it! I don't mean that to be in a rude way. But my taste is not there."

At a time when pop genres are colliding and collapsing, Gaga is contributing to their downfall. She notes that "Boys Boys Boys," the first song that she wrote with her main producer RedOne, is a club track that borrows its "gang chorus" from the hard rock of AC/DC. "I told him, I want to make pop music that my heavy metal friends will listen to," she explained.

"Aside from her few piano ballads, which are like early 1970s Elton John, her dance music is pretty much on-the-

See LADY on Next Page

Actor Charlie Sheen arrested in Colorado

ASPEN, Colo. (AP)—Charlie Sheen spent the better part of Christmas Day in a Colorado jail cell after being arrested on domestic violence allegations.

The 44-year-old actor was taken into custody Friday morning by officers responding to a 911 call from a house in this ski resort town about 200 miles west of Denver.

An ambulance went to the house, but the accuser was not taken to the hospital.

Sheen, the star of CBS' "Two and a Half Men," was taken to the Pitkin County jail and booked for investigation of second-degree assault and menacing, both felonies, along with criminal mischief, a misdemeanor, Aspen police spokeswoman Stephanie Dasaro said.

He was released in the late afternoon after posting $8,500 bond and being advised by a county judge on the conditions of his release, she said.

Dasaro declined to name Sheen's accuser, citing a department policy prohibiting the identification of potential victims in domestic violence cases.

Aspen attorney Richard Cummins said late Friday that he was representing Sheen in the case. He declined to name Sheen's accuser or discuss details, but he cautioned against any rush to judgment.

"I think at the end of the day it will be much ado about nothing," Cummins told The Associated Press. "I don't think there's any criminality about what went on."

Cummins said a court date was set for Feb. 8. "That may be to determine whether a case goes forward or not," he said.

AP

This Jan. 28, 2009 file photo shows Charlie Sheen in Los Angeles.

Sheen's publicist Stan Rosenfield also warned against making assumptions.

"It would benefit everyone not to jump to any conclusion," he said.

Sheen is the son of actor Martin Sheen and brother of actor-director Emilio Estevez. He is married to Brooke Mueller Sheen, a real estate investor who gave birth to the couple's first children, twin boys, in March. They married in May 2008 following Sheen's bitter divorce and custody battle with actress Denise Richards.

The star of "Platoon," "Wall Street" and the "Hot Shots!" movies has had run-ins with the law before. In December 1996, he was arrested and charged with attacking a girlfriend at his Southern California home. He later pleaded no contest and was placed on two years' probation.

In 1998, his father turned him in for violating his parole after a cocaine overdose sent him to the hospital. He was later ordered to undergo a rehabilitation program.

Susan Boyle continues to dominate album sales

By RANDY LEWIS
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Alicia Keys' new album, "The Element of Freedom," logged impressive first-week sales of 417,000 copies, enough to put her at No. 1 just about any other week of this year.

But she has to settle for a debut in the runner-up slot this week, as Susan Boyle's "I Dreamed a Dream" continues at the top of the U.S. sales chart for a fourth consecutive week.

Boyle's collection posted a 14 percent sales increase over last week, logging 661,000 copies heading into the final days before Christmas, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

That puts the album's four-week total at 2.4 million, placing her ahead of Michael Jackson's "Number Ones" and behind Taylor Swift's "Fearless" on the list of the biggest-selling albums of 2009.

Despite the gangbusters numbers at the top of the chart, overall music sales were down 12 percent last week compared with the same week last year, and year-to-date sales are down 13 percent compared with 2008.

BEST SELLERS

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NONFICTION

Open, by Andre Agassi (Knopf: $28.95). The tennis star's memoir and personal odyssey of a lost childhood, drug use and comebacks.

What the Dog Saw, by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown: $27.99). A collection of the author's writings of everyday and extraordinary people.

Stones Into Schools, by Greg Mortenson (Viking : $26.95). The author's continued struggle to establish schools for girls in Afghanistan; a sequel to Three Cups of Tea.

Outliers, by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown: $27.99). An exploration of the background of high achievers.

Have a Little Faith, by Mitch Albom (Hyperion: $23.99). Albom's observations of a rabbi and a pastor on an eight-year journey of faith.

Lit, by Mary Karr (Harper: $25.99). The author's descent into alcoholism and recovery.

Guinness World Records 2010, by Guinness World Records (Guinness: $28.95). Bizarre and unfathomable feats from the first decade of the 21st century.

Going Rogue, by Sarah Palin (HarperCollins: $28.99). A memoir of the 2008 vice-presidential nominee and former Alaska governor.

SuperFreakonomics, by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner (William Morrow: $29.99). More funny, informative facts and questions to ponder.

Last Words, by George Carlin with Tony Hendra (Free Press: $26.99). Memoir of the acerbic comedian's 50-year career, filled with triumphs, substance abuse and setbacks.

FICTION

The Help, by Kathryn Stockett (Putnam: $24.95). The lives of a maid, a cook and a college graduate become intertwined as they change a Mississippi town.

U Is for Undertow, by Sue Grafton (Putnam: $27.95). PI Kinsey Millhone investigates the 20-year-old case of the mysterious disappearance of a 4-year-old girl.

Too Much Happiness, by Alice Munro (Knopf : $25.95). The short story master explores women and their relationships in 10 new stories.

The Lacuna, by Barbara Kingsolver (Harper: $26.99). A writer's escapades encompassing 1930s Mexican artist communities and Cold War America.

Wolf Hall, by Hilary Mantel (Henry Holt: $27). The rise of Henry VIII's adviser Thomas Cromwell.

The Lost Symbol, by Dan Brown (Doubleday: $25.99). Harvard professor Robert Langdon uses his symbology skills to find a missing Freemason in Washington, D.C.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days, by Jeff Kinney (Amulet: $13.95). Greg desires to spend summer vacation indoors despite his mother's wishes for outdoor family fun.

Eclipse, by Stephenie Meyer (Little, Brown: $19.99). Bella must choose between her lover and a friend, between life and death.

I, Alex Cross, by James Patterson (Little, Brown: $27.99). Detective Alex Cross infiltrates a secret society while tracking down the killer of a close relative.

Nine Dragons, by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown : $27.99). A Los Angeles Police Department detective travels to Hong Kong to solve the murder of a Chinese immigrant.

LADY

From Page 18

money current Euro dance," said her recent collaborator Adam Lambert in a separate interview. "But she's a rock star in her mentality. (Her attitude is) like, 'I hope this makes you look. I'm going to be subversive and out there because it makes me feel good and liberated to be that way.' "

It's arguable that Gaga could realize her artistic vision only in the center of the pop mainstream. Her critical supporters laud her for reconnecting pop to other cultural forms and for revitalizing the stream of art-into-pop first opened up by bands like Roxy Music and the Patti Smith Group.

But she's not alone in that effort. Kanye West played a gala at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art before she did; Beyonce referenced Bob Fosse. Go a notch lower in visibility, as Gaga's critics point out, and examples abound of rock and club kids with art connections, from Karen O to Alison Goldfrapp.

Gaga has done something more specific: She has tapped into one of the primary obsessions of our age—the changing nature of the self in relation to technology, the ever-expanding media sphere, and that sense of always being in character and publicly visible that Gaga calls "the fame"—and made it her own obsession, the subject of her songs and the basis of her persona.

"Celebrity life and media culture are probably the most overbearing pop-cultural conditions that we as young people have to deal with because it forces us to judge ourselves," she said. "I guess what I am trying to do is take the monster and turn the monster into a fairy tale."

That stars embody the social concerns of their age is a pop-culture truism. But only rarely does an artist dig beneath the dermis of our shared anxieties, exposing the liquid matter that runs through the shared fantasies and delusions of a particular moment.

"It's kind of like a crusade in its own way," she said. "Me embodying the position that I'm analyzing is the very thing that makes it so powerful."

IN CELEBRATION OF HER NEW LIFE

Rosa Manglona Atalig Camacho

lovingly known as "Chai"

Born on May 28, 1939
Was called to Her eternal rest on Monday, December 21, 2009

In Her new life, she now joins Her:

Parents: †Serafin Mendiola Atalig & †Rosario Masga Manglona Atalig
Parents-in-law: †Sebastian Taimanao Camacho & †Dolores Borja Tudela Camacho
Brothers: †Javier M. Atalig and †Enrique M. Atalig
Sister-in-law: †Chong Quichocho Atalig
Brothers-in-law and Sisters-in-laws: †Santiago T. & †Josepha M. Camacho, †Froilan T. Camacho, and †Vicente T. & †Marcela N. Camacho

Her memory will forever live in the hearts of her:

Husband: David Tudela Camacho
Children:
Joseph & Lydia Barcinas: Alden, Janice, Rosa Jean, Bruce, Dion, Lisa, Dominic, and Mark
Juan & Patricia B.: Roben Jay, Ryan, Randy, Derek
Dolores C. & Juan Aguon: Victor, Sebastian, Doreen, and Stacilynn
Francisca: Spencer, Andave, Vinson, Angelo, Eva Rose
Henry & Bridgette DLG.: Joshua Clayton, Christian Lloyd, Henry Jr., David John, Britney Alayne, and Vanessa Lynn,
Serafin & Lillian C.: Jonathan, Joel, Justin Jude, and Serafin Jr.
Edward & Lourdes M.: Lance Edward and Amber Rose
David Jr. & Efiginia "Effie" S.: Daven, Darron, Dustin, Dylen, Abigail, Justin, and Remy Dee Rose
Miguel "Mike" & Charlotte DLG.: Brandon Michael, William Jesse, Bradley Alvin, Elizabeth Nicole, and Holden
Vicente & Ellen C. Santos: Vincent Shane, Kianna Samantha, Benellen, Vicente II, Jeremiah, Ana Marie, and Raymond
Anthony & Rose S. Pangelinan: Charisse, Raegine Agnes-Rose, Sebastian David-Anthony, and Spencer Jon

Brothers & Sisters-in-law: Marina V. Atalig, Dionicio M. & Berdine Atalig, Herman M. Atalig & Denise King
Sisters & brothers-in-laws: Ree Atalig Lee, Bernadita Atalig & Nicholas Nekai, Guadalupe A. & Edward Flores, Victoria A. & Ethan Gums III
Brothers-in-law & Sisters-in-law: Andres T. & Aida Camacho, Andrea B. Cabrera, Anunciacion "Asako" M. Camacho-Magofna
Caretaker: Maria Christine Danao

She is also survived by numerous Great-grandchildren, Godchildren, Nieces, and Nephews.

Nightly rosary is being said at 7:45 pm at Santa Remedios Church, Tanapag.
On December 24 rosary will be at 12 Noon

On Tuesday, December 29, 2009 our beloved Rosa will be escorted from the Borja Funeral Home at 7:00 a.m. to Mt. Carmel Cathedral.
Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m.
Followed by interment services at Tanapag Cemetery.

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.
THE FAMILY

Small, private funeral held for Brittany Murphy

AP

This photo provided by Hybrid Productions shows Brittany Murphy while working on the set of "Abandoned" in Los Angeles in June, 2009.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Brittany Murphy's family says words can't express the devastation they felt as they laid the 32-year-old actress to rest at a private Christmas Eve funeral.

The service began Thursday afternoon and stretched into the evening as a Christian minister and a rabbi presided and guests sang "Amazing Grace" at the grave site at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills.

"A bright light that lit the world is forever dimmed, but will live on in the hearts of those that Brittany touched," her family said in a statement. "Brittany was an incredibly loving and passionate person and an artist to her core."

The intimate gathering was "very nice, very respectful," said longtime family friend Alex Ben Block. He said Murphy loved Christmas and that it was ironic that she was buried on Christmas Eve.

Her husband, Simon Monjack, talked about their relationship and called her his best friend and soul mate. The two married in 2007.

Her closest friends and her cousin also recalled their favorite memories of her.

A small group of reporters and a few news vans waited outside the main gates of the cemetery, where luminaries such as Liberace, Bette Davis, Lucille Ball, Gene Autry and Freddie Prinze are buried.

Murphy died Sunday after collapsing at her Hollywood Hills home.

Authorities continue to investigate the death but do not suspect foul play. An autopsy performed Monday was inconclusive, and the coroner's office is awaiting results of toxicology and tissue tests before determining an official cause of death.

Murphy moved with her mother, Sharon, to Los Angeles when she was a teenager to pursue an acting career. She started out in sitcoms and commercials in the early 1990s before winning starring roles in several films.

Her breakthrough role came in 1995, as a dowdy high school student (and best friend of star Alicia Silverstone) in "Clueless."

Murphy worked steadily after that. She shared the screen with Winona Ryder and Angelina Jolie in 1999's "Girl, Interrupted." She played Eminem's love interest in "8 Mile" and Ashton Kutcher's wife in "Just Married." She starred as a suspicious girlfriend in 2004's "Little Black Book" and a barmaid with an abusive ex-boyfriend in 2005's "Sin City." She also voiced Gloria the penguin in the 2006 animated film "Happy Feet."

Murphy was juggling multiple movie projects in the months before her unexpected death, wrapping two indie thrillers over the summer and preparing to shoot a romantic comedy next month.

Michael Feifer, who directed Murphy in her final role, described the actress as professional, kind and healthy on the set of "Abandoned." Monjack accompanied her on set and served as her hair and makeup artist.

"The two of them really took care of each other," Feifer recalled. "He was her teddy bear, and she was just his little princess."

The future of that film and Murphy's other thriller, "Something Wicked," is uncertain. Neither has secured theatrical distribution.

Depp has mad vision for Hatter role

By RACHEL ABRAMOWITZ
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Depp

HOLLYWOOD—When he takes on a role, Johnny Depp often paints a watercolor portrait of the still-forming character to help find his face and personality. After putting the finishing touches on his painting for "Alice in Wonderland," Depp looked down at the Mad Hatter staring back at him from the canvas and giggled.

"I was thinking," the actor said, " `Oh my God, this one will get me fired!' "

It's hard to imagine any pink slips in the future for Depp, who is one of the biggest movie stars in the world at the moment. But his version of the Mad Hatter for Tim Burton's interpretation of "Alice in Wonderland" has stirred interest and, early on, some skepticism from literary purists who say it's a far cry from the character as described in Lewis Carroll's 19th century writings or from images in the collective public imagination shaped by years of stage productions and the 1951 Walt Disney animated classic.

Depp's extreme vision for the character—who arrives in theaters on March 5—creates yet another vivid screen persona for the Hollywood chameleon who has played Sweeney Todd, Willie Wonka, Edward Scissorhands and a certain scoundrel named Jack Sparrow. The 46-year-old actor said his Hatter's springy mass of tangerine hair became a particularly important detail because of one of the suspected origins of the term "Mad as a hatter."

In the 18th and 19th centuries, mercury was used in the manufacture of felt, and when used in hats it could be absorbed through the skin and affect the mind through maladies such as Korsakoff's syndrome. Hatters and mill workers often fell victim to mercury poisoning which, in Carroll's time, had an orange tint—hence Depp's interest in adding brushstrokes of that particular watercolor to his portrait.

"I think (the Mad Hatter) was poisoned—very, very poisoned," Depp said. "And I think it just took affect in all his nerves. It was coming out through his hair and through his fingernails, through his eyes"

Dsquared2's Caten twins launching into limelight

AP

This photo taken Sept. 25, 2008 shows Canadian twins Dan, left, and Dean Caten acknowledging the applause at the end of their DSquared2 Spring/Summer 2009 fashion collection presented in Milan, Italy.

NEW YORK (AP)—Dan and Dean Caten are loving this moment in the limelight.

The twin-brother team behind the fashion label Dsquared2 are on TV and the radio, they created concert costumes for Madonna and Britney Spears, and they'll be outfitting the headlining performers at the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Earlier this year, they received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame—the only fashion designers to be honored alongside the likes of Michael J. Fox and Wayne Gretzky.

They have a collection of branded MAC cosmetics as well as eyewear and fragrance deals. But any time it seems success might go to their heads, they remember their modest Canadian roots and have a good chuckle.

Actually, they do more than chuckle, they crack each other up, communicating in shorthand that takes other people in the room a little while to understand.

"We are twins in every sense of the word," says Dan, who describes himself as the more approachable of the two—although he's also the one who'll crack the whip at work.

Dean claims he's "taller and thinner," sucking in his cheeks and striking a model-worthy pose.

Hysterics ensue.

They've been this close since the day they were born in 1964 in Willowdale, Ontario, and have wanted to work in fashion almost as long, Dean says. Family life was as ordinary as it could be in a household with nine kids, yet he and Dan always had an eye on a bigger picture that his family couldn't see—one that would take them to New York, Milan, Italy, and now London.

"It was normal people, growing up, just not us," Dean says. "We didn't quite fit in, but it was still fun."

Dan jumps in: "With five sisters, though, we did a lot of shopping, dressed them for a lot of proms and parties—and we dressed them! We could do it on a budget, which allowed us to be more creative, and they trusted us because they knew we knew better than them."

The way they tell it, they couldn't wait to start their careers. The first stop was a summer program at Parsons School of Design straight out of high school, but before they knew it they were back in Canada, coaxed by the owner of Ports International (now known as Ports 1961).

It was there that the Catens cut their technical teeth, learning how to cut a pattern, tailor a jacket and critique their own work. On a local scale of success, they were a hit—but the brothers weren't satisfied. It was going to be the European runway or bust.

"People say, `Why risk everything?' But I say, `Why not risk everything?'" Dan says.

"We chose Europe instead of New York," Dean adds, "because it was not so easy to come back home."

Still, they're proud of their Canadian roots: Maple leaves are incorporated into several designs each season.

They started in menswear in 1994 and added womenswear in 2003. Their runway shows are among the most elaborate and flashy on the Milan schedule with themes ranging from "Charlie's Angels" to "Mad Max."

Personally, they only wear clothes with the Dsquared2 label. "We're our own customer. We know what we want and need, so it's all from our heart and it works," Dean says.

(Dean has been known to act as the fitting model—even for the womenswear—because, he explains, no one else is available in the middle of the night when he does his best work. He says he has mastered high heels.)

The new spring collection has a campfire vibe, presented on the catwalk with "Delta Dawn" by Helen Reddy blaring through the speakers. "Deep down inside, we're a little `hick,'" Dan says with a smile.

Music is a key source of inspiration, the Catens say, and they put together the playlist for their runway shows as they're sketching styles. Their famous soundtracks led to XM Radio's "Dean and Dan On Air: Style in Stereo" and now they host Bravo's new "Launch My Line," which gives artistic professionals a chance to break into the fashion biz.

The Catens' personalities largely serve as the glue for the TV show.

Police: Ivana Trump becomes angry, taken off plane

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)—Police say Ivana Trump has been escorted off a plane in Florida after she became belligerent when children were running and screaming in the aisles.

Authorities say the first ex-wife of billionaire Donald Trump cussed at the children Saturday, and when flight attendants on the New York-bound plane tried to calm her, she became even more aggravated.

Her spokeswoman, Catherine Saxton, did not immediately return a telephone message. Trump filed for divorce from her fourth husband earlier this month.

She has not been charged in the incident at Palm Beach International Airport.

Palm Beach County sheriff's deputies asked Trump to voluntarily exit the plane, but they said she refused. She was then escorted off.

Couple sues Gene Simmons over alleged attack

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A couple who said they were assaulted by Gene Simmons sued the KISS bassist for unspecified damages Thursday, court records show.

Nathan Marlowe and his wife Cynthia Manzo said Simmons attacked them, threatened them and took their video camera at the upscale The Grove mall on Saturday after they started filming the rocker.

AP

In this Aug. 24, 2009 file photo, Gene Simmons arrives at the premiere of the film "Extract" in Los Angeles.

The couple's attorney, Matthew Nezhad, says a police report was filed. The couple sought a restraining order against Simmons on Wednesday, but that petition was denied.

Simmons has not been arrested and no charges have been filed.

According to the complaint and restraining order application, Marlowe asked Simmons for his view on monogamy, and Simmons responded by telling Marlowe to get his shot and leave. The filings state Simmons then lunged and attacked Marlowe, taking the video camera, then turned on Manzo when she tried to get the camera back.

A phone message seeking comment from Simmons' entertainment attorney was not immediately returned.

The couple are seeking damages of more than $25,000 for civil claims of assault, battery and infliction of emotional distress. The lawsuit was filed as a verified complaint, meaning Marlowe and Manzo signed it under penalty of perjury.

Singer Feliciano protests 'Feliz Navidad' parody

NEW YORK (AP)—Grammy-winner Jose Feliciano has gotten an apology after accusing a pair of radio producers of trashing the spirit of Christmas by using his popular holiday song, "Feliz Navidad," for a racist musical spoof about undocumented immigrants.

Feliciano released a statement Wednesday saying that he was "revolted beyond words" and that the song was never meant to be "a vehicle for a political platform of racism and hate."

"When I wrote and composed 'Feliz Navidad,' I chose to sing in both English and Spanish in order to create a bridge between two wonderful cultures during the time of year in which we hope for goodwill toward all," the Puerto Rico-born singer said.

The parody, titled "The Illegal Alien Christmas Song," was created by radio producers and writers Matt Fox and A.J. Rice and was posted in mid-December on the Web site for Human Events, a Washington-based conservative weekly publication founded in 1944.

Web site editor Jed Babbin apologized Wednesday and said the song would be removed from the site. The link to the song's page was no longer available by Thursday.

"We regret any offense that Mr. Feliciano may have taken from this parody," Babbin said in an e-mail sent to The Associated Press.

One passage from the parody, sung in English, riffed on the stereotype of Latino immigrants as heavy drinkers, while another said "illegals" were going to "spread bubonic plague."

Born in Lares, Puerto Rico, in 1945, Feliciano was raised in New York City and wrote "Feliz Navidad" in 1970. It is one of the most popular Christmas songs in the world.

'American Idol' returns Jan. 12 for 9th season

NEW YORK (AP)—"American Idol" will return next month with a two-night, four-hour premiere featuring auditions in Boston and Atlanta, the Fox network says.

The Boston auditions will air Jan. 12 and the Atlanta auditions will air Jan. 13, the network announced Wednesday. Auditions for the ninth season of the popular singing competition will also be held in Chicago; Orlando, Fla.; Dallas; Los Angeles and Denver.

This year's big change: Ellen DeGeneres is replacing Paula Abdul as judge. DeGeneres will join the show in February, after the tryout rounds, Fox says.

Guest judges joining Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Kara DioGuardi include Victoria Beckham, Mary J. Blige, Kristin Chenoweth, Neil Patrick Harris, Joe Jonas, Avril Lavigne, Katy Perry and Shania Twain.

AP

This Aug. 30, 2006 file photo shows Ellen DeGeneres, host of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," posing in her studio dressing room in Burbank, Calif.

Abdul announced she was quitting amid a contract dispute earlier this year.

Twelve male and 12 female semifinalists will be announced Feb. 17, with voting to begin Feb. 23. Last season, "American Idol" brought 36 men and women to Hollywood to compete, compared with two dozen in previous seasons. The network said in an e-mail that no one was available Thursday to comment on the return to that format.

Folk-rocker Vic Chesnutt dies in Ga. at 45

ATHENS, Ga. (AP)—Vic Chesnutt, the folk-rocker whose sometimes dark reflections on life were influenced in part by a car wreck that left him paralyzed, has died. He was 45. Family friend Christina Stuckey, who answered the phone at Chesnutt's home, confirmed the death to The Associated Press. Chesnutt's record label, Constellation Records, said in a statement on its Web site that Chesnutt died on Christmas Day, Friday.

The brief statement says "Vic transformed our sense of what true character, grace and determination are all about."

Chesnutt worked with such notable artists as R.E.M. lead singer Michael Stipe and guitarist Guy Picciotto of the punk band Fugazi.

Chesnutt said in a biography posted on his MySpace page that he came to "a whole new understanding of music" after the 1983 car crash.

He recently had toured with his Vic Chesnutt band, a "supergroup" of sorts featuring members of Canadian bands Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Thee Silver Mt. Zion Orchestra, as well as Picciotto.

"This is a truly incredible braintrust, with all these people—we've got some of the smartest and most sensitive punk rockers out there," he told the Athens Banner-Herald for a story in October.

The rocker released two albums in the past year, including "At the Cut."

However, Chesnutt had recently struggled with a lawsuit filed by a Georgia hospital after he racked up surgery bills totaling some $70,000, the Athens newspaper reported. He said he couldn't afford more than hospitalization insurance and couldn't keep up with the payments.

The problems baffled his Canadian bandmates, Chesnutt said.

"There's nowhere else in the world that I'd be facing the situation I'm in right now. They cannot understand what kind of society would inflict that on their population," he said. "It's terrifying."

Supermarket treated like a buffet is no free lunch

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I work for supermarkets as a merchandiser, and a day doesn't go by when I don't see customers eat food they have not yet purchased while they shop.

I was taught as a child that items in a supermarket are not yours to consume until they are first paid for at the register. A supermarket is not a restaurant! You pay for the food before you eat it.

I am sure many people "forget" they handed their child a muffin from the bakery display to keep him or her occupied while they shop. And how can a store weigh the grapes you ate while browsing in the aisles? This is stealing, and parents send the wrong message to their children by letting them graze on the products the store is selling.

By the way, employees are not allowed to say anything to customers when they see it happen. This practice not only keeps prices higher, but also is unhygienic. Shopping carts are filthy; they are rarely cleaned. Pushing a cart and eating a cookie is a perfect way to pick up a serious food-borne illness.

Abby, what are your thoughts on the subject?

SUPERMARKET MERCHANDISER IN NEW YORK

DEAR S.M.: They're the same as yours. Children learn more from the examples set by the adults in their lives than from what they are told. When they see their parents bend the rules, they grow up thinking it's normal. And by the way, this applies not only to what we do, but also to our sins of omission.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: This year was awful. One of my friends shot himself. A few weeks ago a classmate hit a young man, and the guy died. Now I have just learned that yesterday another classmate was killed in a car crash.

All I want to do is hide in my room. I'm scared of what is happening. Who are we going to lose next? Please tell me how to handle this.

SCARED IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR SCARED: When deaths happen with no warning, it is shocking and scary, and you have had more than your share. When tragedies such as you have described happen during the school year, many schools invite grief counselors to come and talk with the students, which can be helpful. If that hasn't happened where you live, it would be a good idea for you and some of your friends to discuss your feelings with a clergyperson or another trusted adult who can guide you through the normal emotions people experience during the grieving process.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: Please settle a disagreement for us. Is a butter knife used to put your butter on your plate, or to spread the butter on your bread?

ETIQUETTE-CHALLENGED IN SHILOH, ILL.

DEAR CHALLENGED: If a small fork isn't provided to transfer the butter to your bread plate, use the butter knife to do it. If the butter is served in a dish, then use your butter knife to scoop out a portion and place it on the edge of the plate.

And by the way, when you take a slice of bread, do NOT butter it all at once. Break off a bite-sized piece, apply the butter, then pop it in your mouth.

P.S. The butter dilemma can be avoided by substituting olive oil instead, which is healthier. When I'm in a restaurant, I often ask for olive oil, to which I add a dash of balsamic vinegar -- making sure the design on my butter plate looks like modern art. Not only is it good for my heart, it's creative and fun.

P.P.S. My editor suggests adding a dash of Parmesan. Delicious!

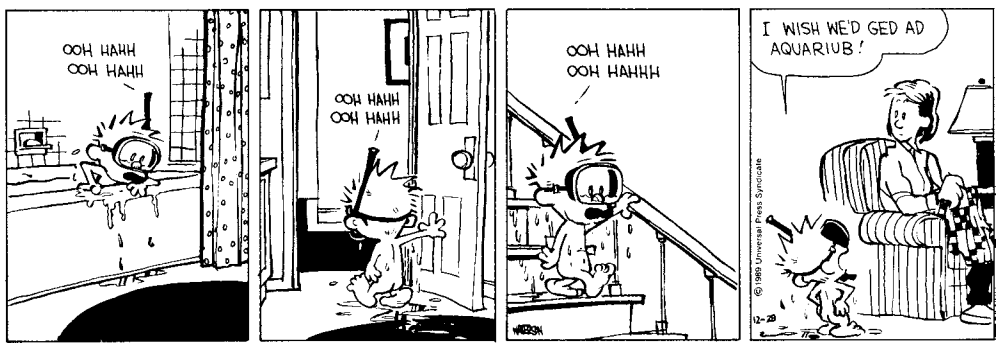
■■■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis

SIGH CHRISTMAS ALWAYS ENDS TOO SOON...
COME BACK, CHRISTMAS!
...AND CAN YOU PICK UP SOME EGGNOG ON THE WAY?!
JIM DAVIS 12-28
www.garfield.com
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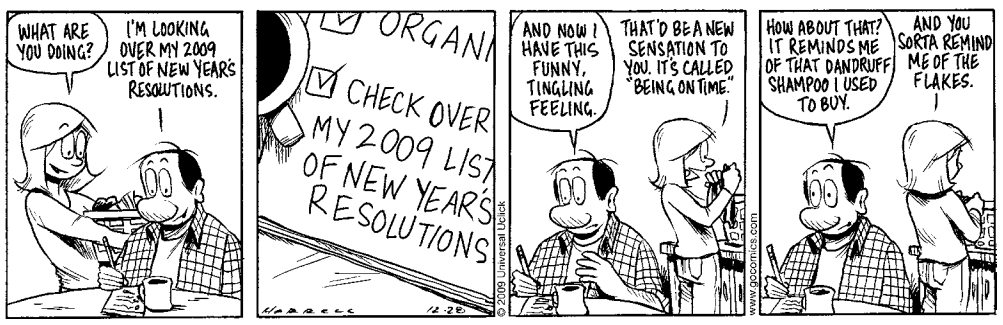
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M LOOKING OVER MY 2009 LIST OF NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS.
ORGANI
CHECK OVER MY 2009 LIST OF NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
AND NOW I HAVE THIS FUNNY, TINGLING FEELING.
THAT'D BE A NEW SENSATION TO YOU. IT'S CALLED "BEING ON TIME."
HOW ABOUT THAT? IT REMINDS ME OF THAT DANDRUFF SHAMPOO I USED TO BUY.
AND YOU SORTA REMIND ME OF THE FLAKES.
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www.gocomics.com

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THIS IS THE WORST RESUME I'VE EVER SEEN! WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D CONSIDER HIRING YOU?!
I'M A REAL "GO-GETTER"!
GOOD. GO GET ME ANOTHER APPLICANT.
OKEY-DOKE.
12-28
GlennMcCoy
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Treasure hunt aid
4 Mario Puzo subject
9 College transcript stat
12 Brewery product
13 Attach
14 Yule fuel
15 "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?" aide
17 Exist
18 Tuna at a sushi bar
19 Tickled
21 Supermarket employee
24 Perches
25 With 26-Across, it "will come," in song
26 See 25-Across
28 Made crow noises
31 Colorless
33 Young fellow
35 Arizona tribe
36 Relaxed
38 Energy
40 "— the fields we go"
41 Unkempt one
43 Baryshnikov's field
45 "Its own reward," they say
47 GIs' entertainers
48 Fuss
49 76 trombones?
54 Zodiac sign
55 Uptight
56 Life story, briefly
57 Dine on
58 Remains
59 Gorilla

DOWN
1 Comedian Bernie
2 Every bit
3 Shooter ammo
4 Pulverized
5 Navy bigwig
6 Safe-products org.
7 Teeny bits
8 Weak
9 Insulation material
10 Skin opening
11 On in years
16 Droop
20 Beehive State
21 Foretell
22 Emanation
23 Fundamental
27 Kisser
29 Duel tool
30 Gossip
32 Suspenders alternative
34 "Clair de Lune" composer
37 Reservations
39 Doesn't get an F
42 Jaunty chapeau
44 High-arc shot
45 Crooner Jerry
46 Concept
50 Literary collection
51 "The — Daba Honeymoon"
52 Pinch
53 Female deer

Solution time: 24 mins.

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N	E	C	K	■	L	E	O	■	T	E	E	D
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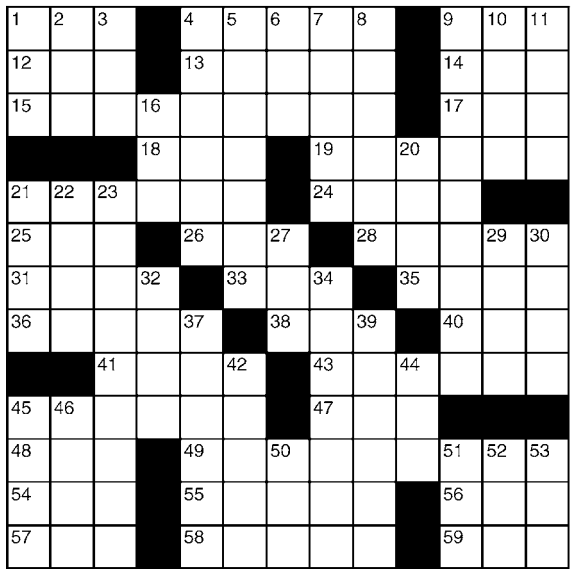
T	O	P	I	■	O	H	O	■	Z	O	N	E
■	■	■	■	K	N	I	T	S	■	P	A	L
G	O	O	D	N	I	G	H	T	■	A	V	E
E	V	A	D	E	■	H	E	Y	■	L	A	G
L	A	T	T	E	■	S	E	X	■	S	L	Y

Friday's answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Malcolm Gets, 45; Denzel Washington, 55; Edgar Winter, 63; Maggie Smith, 75

Happy Birthday: You are sitting in a better position than you realize. Don't second-guess what you are doing. Uncertainty is the enemy this year. Let your determination shine through. Persistence, coupled with a patient but positive attitude will capture the trust you need to gain support. Your numbers are 3, 6, 11, 16, 21, 34, 45

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): It's up to you to keep things on track and moving ahead in a positive manner. If you let anyone interfere, you will only have yourself to blame. Speed and accuracy will be your best asset. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): There is nothing you cannot achieve if you stick to your principles and plans. An offer or suggestion made will help you determine what you really want to achieve. You'll be surprised by the response you get from a proposal you make. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't make the same mistake twice. If you don't have the funds, don't make the purchase. A little extra work may seem daunting now but the payback will make it well worth your while. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Put your heart on the line and let the one you care for most know exactly how you feel. Your plans for the future will be much more meaningful if you have someone to share them with. Focus on the possibility not the impossible. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Stay calm. You do have to stick up for your rights, but you don't have to do it indignantly. Show a little class, stand tall and speak articulately. Your point will be received loud and clear. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Change can turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to you. Your ability to try new things and meet new people will take you into the new year with enthusiasm. You have what it takes to survive any challenge. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): As long as you are compassionate, you will not only solve problems for others but will establish a good position that can lead to future advancement. Don't let your own personal problems get to you. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): You may be masterful at keeping things to yourself but right now it is important to share your feelings and let everyone know what you are planning to do. The help and suggestions you receive will take you by surprise and will bring you the confidence you need to move forward. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): You can't back down when you have put so much thought and preparation into your plans. Someone you've know forever may try to get you to pick an alternate route but, if it doesn't feel right, take a pass. A trip will pay off. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Take control and don't look back. You have to be the one to make your own decisions and to play your hand the way you see fit. Don't stand by waiting to see what others are going to do when what counts is your own game plan. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Don't let situations escalate. Avoid arguments by keeping things light. To touch on controversial subjects when you don't have enough ammunition will leave you in a vulnerable spot. Keep your thoughts to yourself while listening to advice. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Follow your heart and your dreams. A favor will be offered from someone you were acquainted with in the past. Don't be afraid to address something that was left unfinished. Love is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are practical, thoughtful and caring. You know how to gain the confidence of the people around you. You are sensitive and strong-willed.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		9	1	2		8	3	
8			3			2		
3	4				7			6
		4					8	2
5				3				1
6	9					7		
9			2				4	7
		1			5			8
	8	5		4	3	1		

Difficulty Level ★ 12/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's SUDOKU Answer

1	7	3	5	4	8	9	2	6
5	6	2	1	9	7	3	8	4
9	8	4	2	6	3	1	7	5
3	9	6	7	8	4	5	1	2
7	1	8	9	2	5	6	4	3
2	4	5	3	1	6	7	9	8
6	5	1	4	7	2	8	3	9
4	3	9	8	5	1	2	6	7
8	2	7	6	3	9	4	5	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/25

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

THALYS TRAINS **Solution: 10 letters**

D	N	I	A	R	T	N	N	L	G	R	O	U	P	P
E	E	S	M	E	R	E	S	E	E	D	I	U	G	T
P	Y	S	K	U	H	L	R	T	M	V	A	S	A	S
A	T	C	T	C	I	M	O	A	A	A	A	E	E	R
R	I	E	A	I	A	G	D	H	M	T	S	R	E	G
T	R	A	L	N	N	R	L	S	P	D	I	S	T	N
U	U	M	Y	L	E	A	T	E	N	I	E	O	N	I
R	C	G	R	T	I	E	T	A	B	R	H	R	N	D
E	E	Y	T	O	R	V	L	I	V	R	A	C	L	R
C	S	O	E	D	F	R	T	A	O	C	U	U	S	A
N	R	S	A	N	E	T	T	R	P	N	G	G	R	O
E	A	M	E	H	R	I	A	O	E	G	E	R	E	B
L	I	M	T	C	O	U	R	L	A	B	I	R	S	S
A	L	E	U	N	C	U	O	G	P	V	(L)	(I)	(N)	(E)
V	N	F	A	R	E	A	E	J	E	C	N	A	R	F

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Saipan Tribune
Sports
Tribune
TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2009
Angamwas rules 4-person
Fitial eyes Cepeda's re-appointment to NMC board.
DPH to ask for extension of emergency declaration.
$1.35M earmarks for NMI now up for Obama's
Fitial: Ombudsman shouldn't accommodate 'overstayers'
10 DAYS to go before Christmas
Immigration FORUM
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235- NEWS

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

THE FINANCIAL & INSURANCE SERVICES GROUP, INC., Plaintiff,	)	CIVIL ACTION NO. 09-0458
-/-.	)	
DONALD C. CAMACHO, Defendant.	)	SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATIONS

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is served upon you hereby, within twenty-one (21) days after the fourth publication of this Summons, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, the Plaintiff's Attorneys, whose address is P.O. Box 5222, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practicable after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to answer in accordance with this Summons, judment by default may be taken against you for the relief of demanded in the Complaint.

By order of the above court:

/s/ Deputy Clerk of Court

DATED, this 2nd day of December, 2009:

KEVIN'S VIDEO II

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In Re Estate of GEORGE A. MANGLONA, Deceased.	)	CIVIL ACTION NO. 97-1061

FIRST AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on March 11, 2009, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of the Estate of George A. Manglona in and to the following property:

1. Lot 002 T 25. The Estate owns an area of 921 square meters more or less, in fee simple, subject to a lease expiring on October 27, 2042.
2. Lot 114 T 16. The Estate owns this lot in fee simple, subject to a lease expiring on September 18, 2044.
3. Lot 057 T 18. This lot contains an area of 10,000 square meters, and is owned by the Estate in fee simple.
4. Lot 006 T 186. The Estate owns a leasehold interest in this lot, which expires on June 18, 2046. No further rental is due under lease.
5. Lot 008 T 85. This lot contains an area of 901 square meters. The Estate owns a leasehold interest in the lot, which expires on July 21, 2047. No further rent is due.
6. Lot 006 T 17. The Estate owns this lot in fee simple, subject to a lease expiring on October 8, 2049.
7. Lot 001 T 22. This lot contains an area of 1,448 square meters, and is owned by the Estate in fee simple. The lot is subject to mortgages in favor of Pacific Financial Corporation (now known as the Financial & Insurance Services Group, Inc.) and the Commonwealth Development Authority. The proceeds of sale will be applied toward reducing the balances due upon these mortgages.
8. Lot 035 T 18. The Estate owns an undivided 992 square meters of this lot, in fee simple.
9. Lot 035 T 19. This lot contains an area of 4,000 square meters, and is owned by the Estate in fee simple.
10. Lot 114 T 18. The Estate owns this lot in fee simple, subject to a prepaid lease expiring on September 18, 2044.

All of these properties are situated in Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands. All sales are subject to court approval.

Preliminary title reports are available for inspection at the office of the undersigned, by appointment only.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, January 15, 2010, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at the law offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

Dated, this 17th day of December, 2009:

/s/ MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F-0122
Attorney for Administrator

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TIMING TIM ING

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Find today's solution in this section

Gators' Meyer resigns amid health concerns

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP)—While his coaching successes mounted and his tough-as-nails reputation grew, Urban Meyer admits there was one thing he didn't pay much attention to—his health.

That hit home when chest pains sent him to the hospital after Alabama beat his Florida Gators in the Southeastern Conference championship game on Dec. 5.

And so on Saturday, exactly three weeks later, the 45-year-old Meyer shook all of college football by saying he was stepping down. He resigned after five seasons and two national titles. In so many words, he said he needed to get his priorities straight.

He will coach his final game at the Sugar Bowl against Cincinnati on New Year's Day.

He leaves No. 5 Florida with a 56-10 record that includes a 32-8 mark in league play and a school-record 22-game winning streak that was snapped by the Crimson Tide in that SEC title game.

"I have given my heart and soul to coaching college football and mentoring young men for the last 24-plus years and I have dedicated most of my waking moments the last five years to the Gator football program," Meyer said in a statement. "I have ignored my health for years, but recent developments have forced me to re-evaluate my priorities of faith and family."

By leaving, Meyer walks away from a program that has become one of the jewels of college football and at a time when he is considered at the top of his game, with the best winning percentage of any active coach.

Athletic director Jeremy Foley surely will move quickly to find a replacement, and the list of candidates could be long.

Among those sure to receive consideration: Mississippi State's Dan Mullen, Houston's Kevin Sumlin, Utah's Kyle Whittingham, Boise State's Chris Peterson and TCU's Gary Patterson. Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Stanford's Jim Harbaugh and Arkansas' Bobby Petrino could get calls, too.

Meyer had maintained he would never coach as long as Florida State's Bobby Bowden or Penn State's Joe Paterno. He planned to go before anyone asked him to leave.

He probably didn't expect it to end like this, though.

Meyer consulted with his family, doctors, school president Bernie Machen and Foley before deciding it was in his best interest to focus on his health and family.

He has scheduled a news conference in New Orleans on Sunday afternoon.

"Coach Meyer and I have talked this through and I realize how hard this was for him to reach this decision," Foley said. "But the bottom line is that Coach Meyer needed to make a choice that is in the best interest of his well-being and his family. I certainly appreciate what he has meant to the University of Florida, our football program and the Gator Nation. I have never seen anyone more committed to his players, his family and his program. Above all, I appreciate our friendship."

Although reports quickly surfaced that Meyer was suffering from, among other things, a stroke and a defective heart muscle, a person close to Meyer said they were false. The person spoke on condition of anonymity out of respect for Meyer's privacy.

"He just had a wake-up call," the person said. "He got scared and realized he can't do it anymore. His tank is empty."

Last month, Sports Illustrated chronicled Meyer's coaching career and reported that he suffered from persistent headaches caused by an arachnoid cyst that becomes inflamed by stress, rage and excitement.

Meyer told the magazine that since the diagnosis in the early 2000s he has tried to stay composed during games. Nonetheless, it didn't prevent him from spending several hours in a Gainesville hospital following the 32-13 loss to Alabama.

"This wasn't something that just happened last week or last month," the person close to Meyer said. "This has been a long time in the making."

News of Meyer's retirement stunned his peers.

"He is a first-class coach, and the success he's had is unmatched in our profession, especially over the last five years at Florida," Alabama's Nick Saban said. "We hope he is able to regain his health and have the opportunity to coach again in the future. Urban Meyer is a great person as well as a great coach, and the game of college football is better with him as a part of it."

Said Bowden, who retired Dec. 1 after 34 years: "It's a surprise to everybody. I hope he's OK physically because he's done as great a job at the University of Florida as has been done there, or anywhere else. I admire the way he handles himself and I really like his family. The college coaching profession will really miss him."

A tireless recruiter and creative motivator, Meyer came to Florida from Utah in fall 2004 amid speculation he would end up at Notre Dame.

AP

In this Dec. 4, 2009 file photo, Florida head coach Urban Meyer walks past a Florida logo in the Georgia Dome before a practice in Atlanta. Meyer resigned Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009, due to health concerns.

Who's next for Florida?

FLORIDA (AP)—Urban Meyer is walking away from one of the most desirable programs in college football and every coach in the country must be wondering—even if only for a minute—what it would be like to be the next one at Florida.

During Meyer's five seasons, the Gators have become the most glamorous team in the most powerful conference, and the school sits smack in the heart of the nation's most fertile recruiting area.

Meyer decided to give up all that Saturday, citing health concerns.

For athletic director Jeremy Foley, this means another coaching search, his third in the last 10 years.

Will Bob Stoops get a call from Foley? Again.

The Sooners' coach was defensive coordinator at Florida under Steve Spurrier in the 1990s. When Spurrier left abruptly after the 2001 season, Foley reached out to Stoops, but the coach passed.

Stoops already spent a few weeks this season beating back speculation about being a candidate for the Notre Dame job. The Sooners play Stanford in the Sun Bowl on New Year's Eve and Stoops can expect more questions about his commitment to OU.

Maybe one of Stoops' former assistants will be on Foley's list. Houston coach Kevin Sumlin was targeted by Cincinnati to replace Brian Kelly, who took the Notre Dame job. Sumlin passed and by being patient maybe he lands a much bigger prize.

Boise State's Chris Petersen and TCU's Gary Patterson are mentioned when practically any job opens up at a school in the big six BCS conferences. Expect them to be mentioned again in this search.

One of the reasons Florida wooed Meyer was because university president Bernie Machen was at Utah when Meyer coached there.

Maybe because of those ties Florida will head West again. Coach Kyle Whittingham, who was an assistant to Meyer, led the Utes to a No. 2 final ranking last season and 10 wins this season.

Arkansas coach Bobby Petrino, then at Louisville, was considered to be Foley's fallback plan if Meyer had decided against taking the Florida job back in 2004.

Dan Mullen was Meyer's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Utah and Florida before he took the Mississippi State job last year. Mullen led a Bulldogs' team that was thin on talent to five victories this season and they played close against LSU and Florida. Mullen could provide a certain amount of continuity to Florida's latest transition.

Florida defensive coordinator Charlie Strong would have been a prefect replacement, but he has already committed to become the next coach at Louisville; it's doubtful Strong would want to back out on Cardinals athletic director Tom Jurich.

Whoever takes the job will be walking into a gold mine, but it's not without peril. Expectations at Florida are through the roof right now. One of the reasons why Spurrier left for the NFL was because 10 wins and a SEC title weren't good enough for some Gators fans.

As bad as things got for Florida during Ron Zook's three messy seasons as coach in Gainesville, the Gators never won less than seven games.

Escobar, Mets reach $1.25M, 1-year deal

NEW YORK (AP)—After missing out on top arms this offseason, the New York Mets are ready to try a questionable one.

Injury-plagued pitcher Kelvim Escobar and the Mets reached a preliminary agreement on a $1.25 million, one-year contract, a person familiar with the negotiations confirmed Saturday.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no announcement had been made. The deal could be announced by Sunday.

Escobar, an 18-game winner in 2007, missed nearly all of the past two seasons with the Los Angeles Angels because of shoulder trouble. If healthy, he would likely work out of the bullpen for the Mets, who are looking for setup help for All-Star closer Francisco Rodriguez following a 70-92 season.

The 33-year-old Escobar has extensive relief experience from his days in Toronto. He came up with the Blue Jays in 1997 and saved 38 games in 2002.

The right-hander was cleared a few weeks ago to pitch in winter ball by Mets medical director Dr. David Altchek, who performed Escobar's shoulder surgery to repair a torn labrum in July 2008.

Now that he has a deal in place, however, Escobar plans to skip winter ball. After the holidays, he will return to Florida and focus on preparing for spring training, working out with Mets ace Johan Santana and Chris Correnti, a minor league pitching rehabilitation trainer.

Escobar would get a $125,000 bonus for making New York's opening-day roster. He could also earn $2 million in performance bonuses based on games pitched and another $1 million for games finished.

After going 18-7 with a 3.40 ERA in 30 starts for the Angels in 2007, Escobar missed the following season because of his shoulder injury. He struggled to get healthy last season, making it back for only one major league start that lasted five innings.

Escobar filed for free agency this offseason and was not offered arbitration by Los Angeles. He is 101-91 with a 4.15 ERA and 59 saves in 411 major league games, including 202 starts.

The Mets had their own health issues this year. A bewildering string of key injuries sent them into a season-long tailspin that ended with a fourth-place finish in the NL East during the club's first year at pitcher-friendly Citi Field.

Already disgruntled by that debacle, grumbling fans have spent the offseason wondering how the big-budget Mets missed out on free-agent right-hander John Lackey, who signed with Boston, and ace Roy Halladay, who was traded from Toronto to Philadelphia.

Randy Wolf(notes), Rich Harden and Jason Marquis are among the established pitchers who signed elsewhere. New York did agree to a $3 million, two-year contract with Japanese reliever Ryota Igarashi, another setup candidate.

The Mets are still pursuing free-agent left fielder Jason Bay and catcher Bengie Molina.

Lakers survive Kings in double overtime

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Kobe Bryant scored 38 points and the Los Angeles Lakers bounced back from a humbling Christmas Day loss to Cleveland by beating the Sacramento Kings 112-103 on Saturday night in double overtime.

After Lamar Odom opened the second overtime with a putback basket, Bryant connected on a pair of 3-pointers to put the Lakers in front 109-103 with 2:37 left. Los Angeles outscored the Kings 11-2 in the second OT.

Beno Udrih scored 23 points for the Kings, who held the Lakers scoreless in the final 3:35 of the fourth quarter to force overtime. Tyreke Evans had 18 points, Donte Greene had 16 and Omri Casspi added 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Pau Gasol had 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers, who avoided losing consecutive games for the second time this season. Shannon Brown scored 15 points and Odom had 13 points and 15 rebounds.

The Lakers lost 102-87 to Cleveland on Friday before a national TV audience and are in a stretch of four games in five days, concluding Tuesday at home against Golden State. They played without starting forward Ron Artest(notes), who the team said suffered a concussion on Christmas evening, falling while carrying boxes down a flight of stairs and injuring his left elbow at his Los Angeles home.

Artest was treated at UCLA Medical Center, undergoing a CT scan and receiving stitches in the back of his head and his elbow. The team said a neurologist examined Artest on Saturday. He is day to day and didn't travel with the team on its Saturday flight to Sacramento.

The youthful Kings were stagnant on offense late in the first overtime and it carried over into the second, when their only basket was a driving layup by Evans with 3:01 remaining. The Kings lost a game earlier in the week against Cleveland when they were outscored 13-0 in overtime.

After the Kings scored the first seven points in the first overtime, they went scoreless over the final 2:40 as the Lakers rallied. Gasol tipped in a missed shot by Derek Fisher from close range, tying the game at 101 with .04 seconds left.

The victory moved the Lakers (24-5) past idle Boston for the best record in the NBA

AP

Los Angeles Lakers guard Derek Fisher, left, shoots over Sacramento Kings defender Beno Udrih, from Slovenia, right, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif., Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009.

Bulls 96, Hornets 85

At Chicago, Tyrus Thomas returned from injury to score 21 points, Joakim Noah(notes) added 17 points and 18 rebounds, and the Chicago Bulls capped an eventful week with a 96-85 victory over the New Orleans Hornets on Saturday night.

Thomas, back after missing 22 games with a broken left forearm, was active from the moment he entered to a nice ovation 3:09 into the game. He finished 10 for 17 from the floor and also had nine rebounds.

Kirk Hinrich replaced slumping John Salmons in the starting lineup and scored 14 points and Derrick Rose also had 14 for the Bulls, who on Monday blew a 35-point, second-half lead in losing to Sacramento. The next night, they fell to New York despite erasing most of a 22-point deficit.

Rockets 98, Nets 93

At East Rutherford, Reserve Carl Landry scored 26 points to lead the Rockets to a victory over New Jersey, sending the Nets to their ninth straight loss.

Luis Scola and Aaron Brooks each had 17 points, while Trevor Ariza added 13 points and 11 rebounds as the Rockets won for the fourth time in the last five games.

Houston, playing without Tracy McGrady this weekend, beat New Jersey for the seventh straight time.

Devin Harris led the Nets with 19 points, while Yi Jianlian and Brook Lopez each had 17.

Hawks 110, Pacers 98

At Indianapolis, Al Horford had 25 points and a season-high 19 rebounds, leading the Hawks past the Pacers.

Joe Johnson scored 24 points, and Josh Smith had 22 points and five blocks for the Hawks (21-8), who had dropped two of their last three games, all on the road.

Troy Murphy, Tyler Hansbrough and Luther Head all finished with 19 points for Indiana.

Atlanta took control quickly, opening the game on a 9-0 run and taking an 18-4 lead before Indiana made its second basket. The Pacers closed within four twice in the second quarter, but never got closer.

Indiana (9-19) has lost five in a row and has permitted opponents to score at least 100 points in 14 of the last 20 games.

Mavericks 106, Grizzlies 101

At Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 20 points over the first three quarters, then saw his teammates take control in the fourth to carry the Mavericks to a victory over the Grizzlies.

Nowitzki asked for more help from his teammates after the last game and certainly got it. Six other Mavericks scored in double-figures, with Jason Terry scoring 14 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter. He sealed the victory with four free throws in the final 20.6 seconds. Nowitzki was 0 for 2 in the final period.

Erick Dampier had 13 points and 10 rebounds, Jason Kidd had 10 points and 10 assists, Josh Howard had 11 points and Shawn Marion had 10 points as the Mavericks pulled out a split of a four-game homestand, and avenged a 16-point loss in Memphis earlier this month.

Zach Randolph had 27 points and 14 rebounds for the Grizzlies.

Timberwolves 101, Wizards 89

At Minneapolis, Corey Brewer scored 23 of his career-high 27 points in the second half to lead the Timberwolves to a victory over the Wizards.

Kevin Love added 17 points and 10 rebounds against a Wizards team that has seven coaches and players who have significant ties to the Timberwolves organization.

Gilbert Arenas had 26 points, nine assists and seven rebounds. But he made just 10 of his 28 shots for the Wizards, who were looking for their first three-game winning streak since April 2008.

Thunder 98, Bobcats 91

At Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant scored 30 points, Russell Westbrook had 22 and the Thunder held off the Bobcats.

Nenad Krstic added 13 points and 10 rebounds for the surprising Thunder, who improved to 15-14. They didn't earn their 15th win last season until the 60th game, on March 2.

A near-capacity crowd of 17,961 showed up at the 18,203-seat Ford Center, two nights after the biggest snowstorm in Oklahoma City history.

Stephen Jackson had 24 points for the Bobcats, who dropped to 1-13 on the road.

Spurs 112, Bucks 97

At Milwaukee, Tim Duncan scored 26 points and the Spurs never trailed in a victory over the Bucks.

Mehmet Okur scored 16 and pulled down eight rebounds, while Williams had eight assists in Utah's first home game since Dec. 14.

Thaddeus Young scored 20 for the Sixers, who played much of the game without starting center Samuel Dalembert. Dalembert had three fouls midway through the first quarter and played just 16:24, but still managed to pull down nine rebounds.

The Spurs opened a 20-point lead in the second quarter and Milwaukee never got within single digits in the second half.

Tony Parker had 16 points and eight assists for San Antonio, which has won four of five. Antonio McDyess scored 14 points and Manu Ginobili added 13.

Warriors 132, Suns 127

At Oakland, Monta Ellis was his normal stellar self and Golden State's mercurial point guard finally got some help.

Corey Maggette scored a season-high 33 points and had eight rebounds, one of six Warriors players in double figures, and Golden State held Phoenix to four points over the final 2:54 to beat the Suns 132-127 on Saturday and end a seven-game skid.

"At the end of the day, we're really just trying to lift Monta up because he's the backbone of this team," said Maggette, who is averaging 24.4 points in his last seven games. "We're just trying to get him some leeway to where he doesn't have to play 40-plus minutes a game and get burned out."

Jazz 97, Sixers 76

At Salt Lake City, the Utah Jazz made the most of a brief stop at home.

The Jazz traded scoring runs with Philadelphia for three quarters, then shut down the 76ers in the fourth period Saturday night for a 97-76 victory.

Utah held Philadelphia scoreless for nearly nine minutes to pull away to a blowout in the Jazz's first home game in almost two weeks.

"We got off to a terrible start. The way we played it was a good thing we had a chance to make amends a little bit," Utah coach Jerry Sloan said. "We have to learn how to cut the turnovers down because those things have been killing us."

Artest injured in fall at home

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Los Angeles Lakers forward Ron Artest suffered a concussion and injured his left elbow after falling at his home.

Artest didn't travel with the Lakers to Saturday's game at Sacramento after tripping over a box and falling down a flight of stairs at his home on Christmas night, the team said in a news release.

He was treated at UCLA Medical Center, undergoing a CT scan and receiving stitches in the back of his head and his elbow. A neurologist examined him on Saturday and confirmed he had a concussion, the team said. Artest is day to day.

Artest scored 13 points and fouled out while guarding LeBron James in the Lakers' 102-87 loss to Cleveland earlier Friday. Artest is averaging 12.3 points and 4.8 rebounds in his first season with Los Angeles after signing as a free agent.

Lakers coach Phil Jackson allowed his players to stay home with their families on Christmas night, apparently getting permission from the NBA to fly to Sacramento on Saturday morning.

Asked his interpretation of Artest's injury before the Lakers' game against the Kings, Jackson responded, "What do you mean, 'What's my interpretation?' What's that supposed to mean?

"Let me see, my interpretation is that an accident happened, he fell down, he ended up in the hospital, and he came out with some stitches. Other than that, I can't add anything to it."

Los Angeles began a stretch with four games in five days on Christmas, culminating in a home game against Golden State on Tuesday.

"What I was telling the team is that he brings a certain physical presence to our game," Jackson said. "And we'll miss that part of his game."

Pacquiao says he plans to sue Mayweather

BOXING

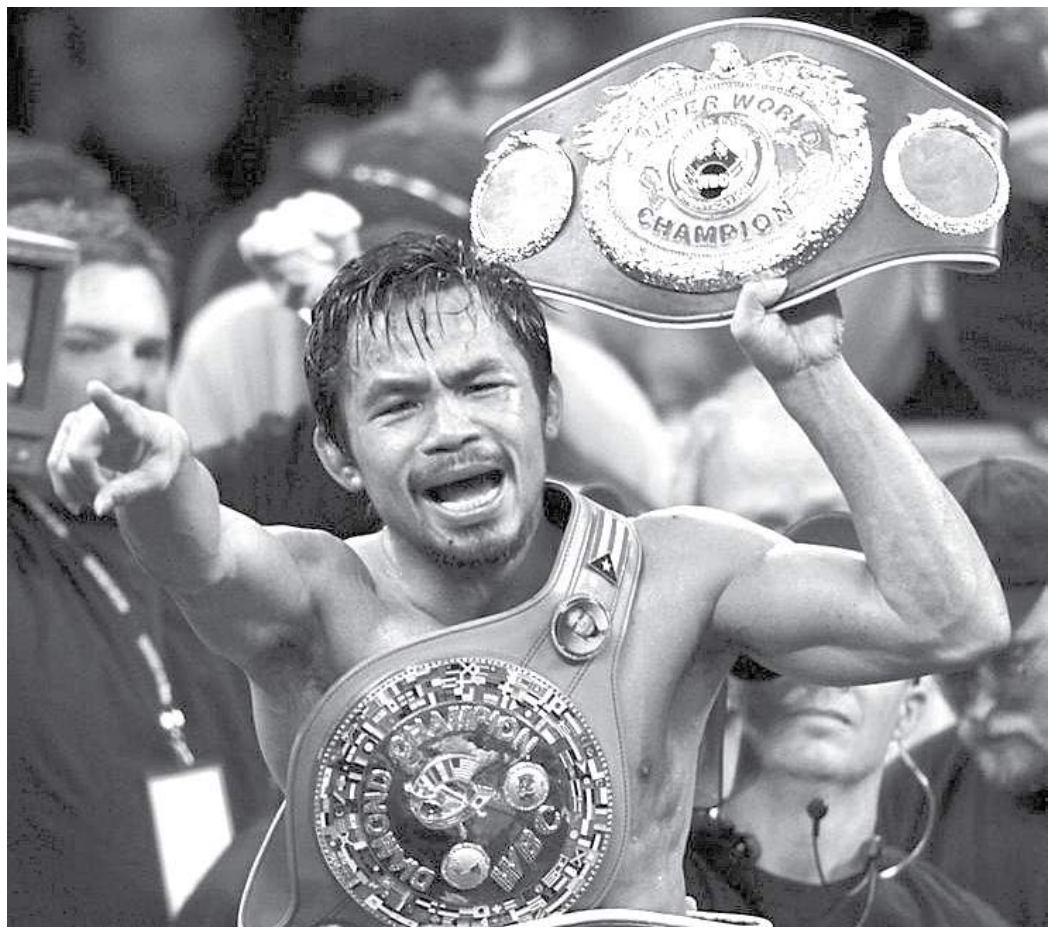
SARANGANI, Philippines (AP)—Manny Pacquiao says he is planning to file a defamation lawsuit against Floyd Mayweather Jr., the fighter's father, and Golden Boy Promotions

In a statement posted Friday on his Web site, Pacquiao claims that his character has been damaged and tarnished by accusations he says are untrue.

"Enough is enough," Pacquiao said in the statement. "These people, Mayweather Sr., Jr., and Golden Boy Promotions, think it is a joke and a right to accuse someone wrongly of using steroids or other performance-enhancing drugs. I have tried to just brush it off as a mere pre-fight ploy but I think they have gone overboard."

The proposed megafight between Pacquiao and Mayweather is in danger because the sides have failed to find a compromise to a dispute over blood testing. Promoter Bob Arum declared the bout dead Thursday.

Arum had set a Thursday deadline for an agreement on testing, the only issue not resolved for the planned March 13 fight. But with the Mayweather camp still insisting on using the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency to conduct the tests, Arum said there wasn't much left to discuss.



AP

Manny Pacquiao, of the Philippines, holds the championship belt at the finish of his WBO welterweight boxing title fight against Miguel Cotto, of Puerto Rico, in this Nov. 14, 2009 file photo, in Las Vegas.

"These people think they are doing the sport a great service. They are not," Pacquiao added. "To Floyd, despite all these accusations, may your Christmas be merry and I will see you in court, soon, too."

At the core of the dispute is the insistence of the Mayweather camp of using Olympic-style drug testing for the fight, even though both fighters have never been linked to any performance-enhancing substances. Under Nevada regulations, boxers are generally only tested just before the fight and in the dressing room afterward, and only urine is given.

"I have instructed my promoter, Bob Arum, head of Top Rank Inc., to help me out in the filing of the case as soon as possible because I have had people coming over to me now asking if I really take performance-enhancing drugs and I have cheated my way into becoming the No. 1 boxer in the world," Pacquiao said.

Mayweather's camp wants blood tests that can find things urine tests can't, such as use of human growth hormone, and they want them done by USADA from the time the fight is signed until the fight is held. Pacquiao's side has agreed to both urine and blood testing, but doesn't want testing immediately before the fight because Pacquiao believes giving blood so soon before a fight will weaken him.

Pacquiao's Web site states that Mayweather's camp is "asking too many unrealistic and unprecedented items on the bargaining table, including that of an Olympic-style drug testing."

"I maintain and assure everyone that I have not used any form or kind of steroids and that my way to the top is a result of hard work, hard work, hard work and a lot of blood spilled from my past battles in the ring, not outside of it," Pacquiao's statement said. "I have no idea what steroids look like, and my fear in God has kept me safe and victorious through all these years.

"Now, I say to Floyd Mayweather Jr., don't be a coward, and face me in the ring, mano-a-mano, and shut your big, pretty mouth, so we can show the world who is the true king of the ring."

FLOW

From Page 28

Nishikido, and Shogo Ando and timed in at 1:34:57.

Finishing third were the Hoopaholics, who were composed of James Lee, Jerry Diaz, Peter Mendiola, Joe Villacrusis, and Emily Matson and submitted a time of 1:38:21.

The Patriots posted the fourth-best time in the race at 1:44:36. Despite their fourth-place finish, it was still an impressive performance for the Patriots, considering they had two 10-and-under runners in brothers John and Danny Auther. Joining the siblings on the team were their mother, Carol, father, Joe, and Tom Linden.

The six other teams to complete the race were The Hangover (1:45:17), 4 Princess and A Prince (1:54:33), Santos Acres (1:58:12), Tawny's Terrorizers (1:55:21), Fans of Whispering Palms (2:00:09), and Extreme DFS (2:01:13).

The Hangover had Lewie Tenorio, Matt Mancao, Willy Garon, Bell Tan, and Jacque Wonenberg on its lineup. Quincy Johnson was the lone male runner for 4 Princess and A Prince and he teamed up with Gemma and Natasha Good, Akane Imaya, and Haoting Romolor.

Santos Acres had the Schultz and Jewell families joining forces. Rob raced with sons Crosby and Kenyon Schultz and they teamed up with siblings Hunter and Zoe Jewell. Tawny Barcinas led Tawny's Terrorizers and was joined by Nick Gross, Rhonda Camacho, Kathy Pagapular, and Brad Ruszala.

Fans of Whispering Palms were composed of Chongnam and Aaron Lee, Wantha Aldrich, Amanda Weindl, and Ryoko Chang, while Extreme DFS had Wolf Mojica, Stan Good, Pete Vilaga, Ben Babauta, and Alex Rocabar as members.

Kabiriel crushes own record

Jack "Ketson" Kabiriel had another record-breaking run en route to a first place finish in the soloist division.

Kabiriel completed the race in 1:44:06, slipping past his 2008 time of 1:47:35. His time last year eclipsed the 1:48:50 Villafria posted in 2007.

Three others joined the soloist division of the race. They were Keum Bae Ji (1:48:44), Andres Buitago (1:51:26), and Roy Ortiso (2:15:35).

MINOR

From Page 28

after Minor and the rest of the Pacific Ocenia Team complete a two-day camp in Albury.

From Shepparton, Minor and company will return to Albury, New South Wales for the 2009 Post Margaret Court Cup, which will take place from Jan. 7 to 12. The 14-year-old netter's last tournament will be the 2009 Victorian Junior Grasscourt Championships in Wodonga from Jan. 13 to 17.

The tournament in Wodonga and Albury were the same events that Ji Hoon Heo competed in early this year and Minor hopes to match if nor surpass the latter's accomplishment in the Land Down Under. Heo was the lone member of the Pacific Oceania Team to make it to the Round of 16 in Albury and Wodonga.

Minor is making her first trip to Australia as part of the Pacific Oceania Team. In the past two years she was also with the team, but she competed in New Zealand on both occasions.

"This is a much different trip compared to the past tournaments I had been to. It will be much tougher, as I will challenge better and more experienced players. However, this is a great experience for me as playing against these tough players will help take my game to a higher level," Minor said.

"I will play my best every game, play aggressive, and fight until the end," said Minor, who used her training in swimming to improve her stamina and prepare for heated matches in the Land Down Under.

Besides seeing action against Kiwi and Aussie players, Minor will also get a chance to watch preliminary games in the 2009 Australian Open in Melbourne on Jan. 18 and 19.

"It will be very exciting watching professional tennis players play. I hope to learn a lot from them, like proper footwork, how to be aggressive, and how to be mentally and physically tough. I hope I can apply what I will learn in Australia when I return to Saipan," said Minor, who is set to return home on Jan. 21.

From Saipan, her father, Boyet, and sister Theecel, accompanied Thea in Guam on Saturday for a connecting flight to Cairns today. From Cairns, Thea will have a stopover in Brisbane before reaching her final destination, Melbourne, where she is expected to arrive on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Thea's mother, Joy, would like to thank Hopwood principal Jonas Barcinas and her daughter's teachers for allowing the CNMI netter to represent the Commonwealth in tournaments in Australia.

NTT

From Page 28

night's do-or-die game.

"Let's not count the offense, just consider how Edsel's presence on the floor makes his teammates play better. If he plays tonight, then IT&E has a very strong chance," Rangamar said.

"However, whether it's IT&E or NTT Docomo, we are ready. We've gone a long way and it doesn't matter which team we play in the finals," said Rangamar.

DCCA was seeded ninth among the 12 teams in the league and had to go through a series of playoff games to reach the finals.

Docomo was seeded third in the playoffs and had to survive Tinian and pennant champion Hyatt Regency Saipan to keep its finals bid alive.

Rangamar said Docomo will have a good chance for the finals seat if it will have its key players available for the game. The DCCA coach was referring to Wowie Abuel, Jun Estolas, Kae Bernardo, and Kelvin Fitial, who are also playing in the UBA league at the Garapan Basketball Court.

These four cagers managed to suit up for Docomo against Hyatt on Wednesday, as games in the UBA caging were cancelled due to rain.

IT&E also has players competing in the UBA caging, missing them in crucial games at the Ada Gym. Elmer Esdrelon arrived only in the second quarter of their game against DCCA, while Darwin Barbo came in with only 1:27 left in the final canto.

Meanwhile, the championship match in the government/business caging will be played next year, not on Dec. 30 as earlier scheduled. DCCA has a twice-to-beat advantage over its would be foe, as the former is unbeaten in the playoffs.

HOLIDAY

From Page 28

and-under division, while the G-Stars' Jericho Cruz (boys 18-and-under) and the Lady Knights' Roxanne Duenas (girls' 18-and-under) received the same award in their respective age groups.

Camacho scored 20 points in their finals game against the Sixers. Cruz tallied 33 points in the G-Stars 86-77 title win over Rollers A, while Duenas fired 24 markers in the Lady Knights' finals triumph over the Lady Ayuyus, 61-56. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	23	5	.821	—
Toronto	14	17	.452	10 1/2
New York	11	18	.379	12 1/2
Philadelphia	7	22	.241	16 1/2
New Jersey	2	28	.067	22

Southeast Division

Orlando	22	8	.733	—
Atlanta	21	8	.724	1/2
Miami	15	12	.556	5 1/2
Charlotte	11	17	.393	10
Washington	10	18	.357	11

Central Division

Cleveland	23	8	.742	—
Milwaukee	12	16	.429	9 1/2
Chicago	11	17	.393	10 1/2
Detroit	11	18	.379	11
Indiana	9	19	.321	12 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	21	9	.700	—
Houston	18	12	.600	3
San Antonio	16	11	.593	3 1/2
New Orleans	13	15	.464	7
Memphis	13	16	.448	671/2

Northwest Division

Denver	20	10	.667	—
Portland	20	12	.625	1
Utah	17	13	.567	3
Oklahoma City	15	14	.517	4 1/2
Minnesota	7	24	.226	13 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	24	5	.828	—
Phoenix	19	12	.613	6
Sacramento	13	16	.448	11
L.A. Clippers	12	17	.414	12
Golden State	8	21	.276	16

Yesterday's Games

LA Lakers 112, Sacramento 103
Chicago 96, New Orleans 85
Houston 98, New Jersey 93
Atlanta 110, Indiana 98
Dallas 106, Memphis 101
Minnesota 101, Washington 89
Oklahoma City 98, Charlotte 91
San Antonio 112, Milwaukee 97
Golden State 132, Phoenix 127
Utah 97, Philadelphia 76

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Week in Sports

Cage teams get holiday presents

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Two basketball teams received early Christmas gifts last week.

One was NTT Docomo, which got a new lease of life after slipping past Hyatt Regency Saipan, 89-83, in their do-or-die game in the government/business caging.

The win advanced NTT Docomo to the semifinals against corporate rival IT&E. The winner of another make-or-break match tonight will collide against first finalist Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

The San Antonio Sixers had a merrier Christmas than Docomo as the former had already clinched the championship in the 2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League.

The Sixers survived pennant champion G-Stars in the finals, 55-54, to notch their first title under coach Ray Duenas.

Besides their championship trophy, Sixers gunner Joe Ada received two more presents, two days before Christmas Day—the scoring champion plum and the Finals MVP trophy.

The G-Stars' Marvin Rabauliman also got a holiday gift when he was named regular season MVP of the 18-and-under caging.

Christmas gifts also came early for those who won in Trench Wars 11: Redemption at the Royal Taga Hall of Saipan World Resort.

Giovanni "Palaxi" Sablan was one of them, as he foiled Guam's 5-0 bid against Saipan after stopping Guam's Wyneu "1 Time" Bamba on a rear-naked choke with only two seconds left in the first round.

Joining Palaxi on the winners' list were Saipan's Jason "Rush" Tarkong, Jeff "Thunder" Cloud, Lionel "The Hellion" Borja, and Tetsuji Kato, Russia's Iliev Ismail and Bashir Jamlihanov, and Guam's Alex Castro, Dillian and Kyle Pablo, Josh Alvarez, and Tony Reyes.

Other leagues and tournaments on Saipan continued last week before taking a break on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The on-going Inaugural 2009 UBA/Miller Lite Men's Basketball League had games on Monday and played make-up matches on Saturday after its Wednesday games were rained-out.

Ol'Aces met Prospects on Monday and nailed a 91-77 victory to remain unbeaten in four games and claim the solo lead in the eight-team league. In other results, Hoopaholics clobbered Trinity Estate, 85-61, to finally barge into the win column after a 0-3 start.

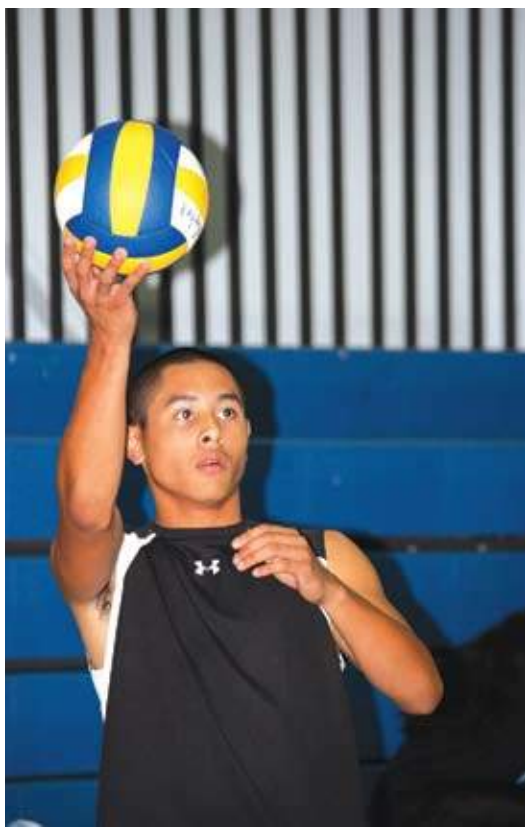
Also gaining its first win in Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slowpitch Softball League was Calikano-Falcons.

Calikano-Falcons outlasted Advance X-Terminators, 21-19, to book its first win in three games. X-Terminations remained winless in three matches.

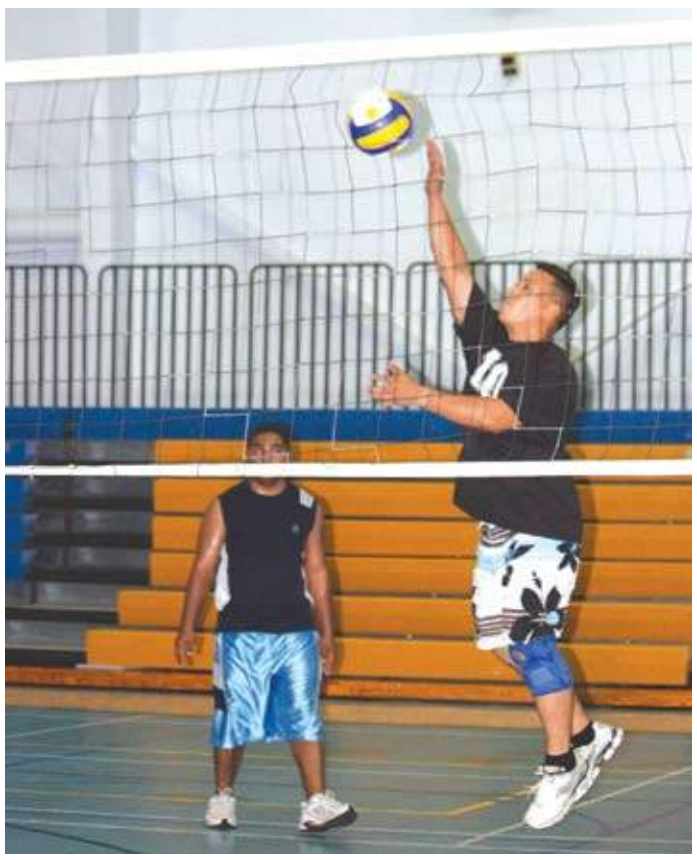
In the other game in the Chamolinian league at the Capital Hill Ballfield, SaiPal cruised to its third straight win in as many matches after whipping Fuegu, 15-5.

The victory put SaiPal in a tie for first place with Natibu and Island Rebels, while the loss kept Fuegu at the bottom of the team standings with its 1-3 slate.

Over at the Marianas High School Gymnasium, 14 teams competed in the 2009 Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament. They were No Fear, Get It, Got It, Good, Tinian, Islanders, Naw Mean, Hopwood Hilitais, and Kagman High School in the men's division, and Tinian, Platinum Slammers, Silly Girls, Ha, MHS Dolphins, Hopwood Hilitais, and Pikan Gaga in the women's division.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Get It, Got It, Good's Brandon Chargualaf prepares to serve against No Fear during the 2009 Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
No Fear's Jonas Barcinas goes for a kill against Get It, Got It, Good during the 2009 Christmas Drug Free Volleyball Tournament at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Top, Giovanni "Palaxi" Sablan holds down Guam's Wyneu "1 Time" Bamba during their bout in Trench Wars 11: Redemption at the Royal Taga Hall of Saipan World Resort.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Charles "Predator" Aiken and Bashir Jamlihanov in action at Trench Wars 11: Redemption at the Royal Taga Hall of Saipan World Resort.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The Sixers' Ernest Duenas tries to keep his balance, as he collides against the G-Stars' Marvin Rabauliman during their title game in the Rotary caging last week at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
NTT Docomo's Kelvin Fitial, left, muscles his way against Hyatt Regency Saipan's Hiro Yamamoto during their do-or-die game in the government/business caging last week at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Ol'Aces' Pete Iguel, left, and Prospects' Bonbon Cadagat battle for the rebound during their game in the UBA caging last week at the Garapan Basketball Court.

Cage teams get holiday presents

One was NTT Docomo, which got a new lease of life after slipping past Hyatt Regency Saipan, 89-83, in their do-or-die game in the government/business caging. 27

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Lakers survive Kings in double overtime

Kobe Bryant scored 38 points and the Los Angeles Lakers bounced back from a humbling Christmas Day loss to Cleveland by beating the Sacramento Kings 112-103 on Saturday night in double overtime. 25

Flow surges to Christmas relay win

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Flow's Ryan Camacho, Florence Antonio, Paul Anthony, Ronald Villafria, and Nicole LeBlanc near the finish line in the Last Command Post during yesterday's 2009 Annual Christmas Island Relay. Right photo, soloist top finisher Jack "Ketson" Kabiriel.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Flow breezed through victory in the 2009 Annual Christmas Island Relay yesterday.

The quintet of Paul Anthony, Nicole LeBlanc, Florence Antonio, Ryan Camacho, and Ronald Villafria completed the early morning race marked by a drizzle in one hour, 34 minutes, and 50 seconds. Flow's time was more than four minutes behind the 2008 winning time, but still it was enough to lift the team to a first place finish against nine other squads.

The 13.7 mile-long race from the southern parking lot of Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi started with 14 runners, including four soloists, racing through a light rain from PIC to Beach Road. When runners made their turn at the American Memorial Park, rain began to stop, but still participants were extra cautious in their steps as they passed through wet and slippery roads.

Clouds started to clear up by the time Flow reached the finish line.

Only seven seconds behind Flow was Team Butterfly, anchored by perennial long distance race winner Mamiko Oshima-Berger. Mamiko teamed up with husband Joshua, Fred Camacho, Tamio

See FLOW on Page 26

Holiday hoops begins today

The 2009 Annual Holiday Hoops will start today.

The Christmas caging is open to both boys and girls in the 11-and-under, 14-and-under, and 18-and-under under age groups. Games will be played at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium and Marianas High Schol Gymnasium.

The tournament will run from Dec. 28 to 31 and on Jan. 2 with each team needs to pay the entrance fee of $30. Squads are allowed to have a maximum of 12 players. The organizing Division of Sports and Recreation will provide uniforms (shirts only) on a first come-first serve basis..

The Lil' Sonics were among the top finishers in last year's holiday hoops, pulling off a come-from-behind win over the San Antonio Sixers, 83-78, in the boys' 14-and-under title game.

Other winners were the Lady Knights and the G-Stars, who downed the Lady Ayuyus and Rollers A, in the girls and boys' 18-and-under division finals, respectively.

Max Camacho of the Lil' Sonics was named MVP in the boys' 14-

See HOLIDAY on Page 26

Minor to join 3 tournaments in Australia

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

CNMI junior tennis player Thea Minor left Saipan on Saturday to compete in three tournaments in Australia.

Minor will be in Land Down Under for more than three weeks to be part of the Pacific Oceania Touring Team that will collide against junior players from Australia and New Zealand.

The Hopwood Junior High School student's first tournament will be the Shepparton netfest in Victoria. This event will run from Jan. 2 to 6, a day

See MINOR on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Thea Minor, seen here in action in a local tournament, left Saipan for Australia on Saturday to compete in three tournaments.

NTT Docomo, IT&E battle for last finals berth

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Corporate rival IT&E and NTT Docomo are on collision course anew, as they fight for the second and last finals berth in the 2009 IT&E Inter Government/Business Basketball League tonight at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

IT&E failed in its first bid to advance to the finals after losing to Department of Community and Cultural Affairs in the winner' s bracket semifinals on Dec. 14, 72-82. The host dropped to the loser's bracket and had to take a week-long break before resuming its attempt for a return trip to the finals.

Whether the break will be a boon or bane for IT&E will be determined in tonight's make-or-break game.

It may be a boon, as it may give Edsel Mendoza time to heal his ailing knees. Mendoza was absent in IT&E's last three games and his team definitely missed his leadership in the match against DCCA. A boon if IT&E shows rustiness from a long lull, just like how they played against DCCA in the first playoff game for a finals ticket.

DCCA player-coach Elias Rangamar believes a healthy Mendoza will spell the difference in to-

See NTT on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

NTT Docomo's Syl Teregeyo, right, goes for a shot against Tinian's Ringo Reyes during their playoff game in the government/business caging last week at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.